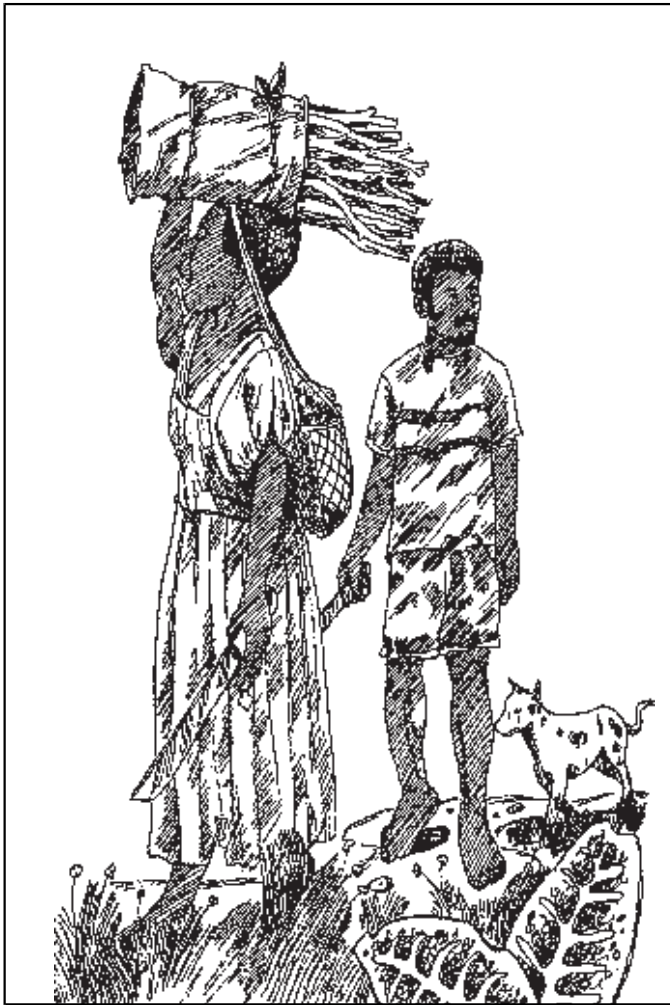


**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**



Using CEDAW at the Grass Roots: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Pacific

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

**USING CEDAW AT THE GRASS ROOTS:
CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION
OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST WOMEN IN THE PACIFIC**



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PREFACE

The Fourth World Conference on Women reaffirmed the universal importance of human rights. The Platform for Action adopted during the Conference states that women's *de jure* equality has yet to be secured in countries which have not signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Women's rights are also still at risk in countries whose reservations are incompatible with the Convention, or which have not revised national laws to fit CEDAW's norms and standards.

CEDAW is the international bill of rights for women. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1979 and the treaty came into force on 3 September 1981. The Convention requires countries to eliminate all forms of discrimination which interfere with women's civil, political, economic and cultural rights. It also establishes guidelines for states to follow in achieving equality between women and men. In pursuing CEDAW's goals, states are encouraged to introduce measures of affirmative action until equality between women and men has been achieved.

Ratification of CEDAW has benefited women in different ways. Some countries have drafted new constitutions that reflect the Convention's goals. Others have introduced legislation which prohibits sex discrimination or entrenches affirmative action policies.

Perhaps CEDAW has achieved its greatest benefits through the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which have used the convention as the benchmark for women's equality. In campaigning for women's rights at the local, national and regional level, these groups have truly reclaimed women's rights as human rights.

This publication is based on a project which was implemented in the Pacific in 1998 and 1999 to support the networking efforts of NGOs in promoting CEDAW. In this project, women's NGOs from four countries (the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Mapusaga O Aiga of Samoa, the Papua New Guinea National Council of Women and the Vanuatu National Council of Women), produced and distributed information materials. Project NGOs also promoted CEDAW by mobilizing community NGOs and collaborating with national NGOs. This project was designed to address the critical problems faced by grass-roots women in the four participating Pacific island countries in two ways. First, it was intended to strengthen the capacity of gender-focused NGOs to communicate and facilitate action at the community level. Second, it was to facilitate the production of a set of summary documents and an information kit highlighting the key concerns of CEDAW. The project implementation reports in this book were written by national project focal points.

Each project focal-point NGO in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu identified their prime concerns vis-à-vis CEDAW, and then conducted public awareness campaigns and other activities to foster women's empowerment.

Although these countries have ratified CEDAW, they hope their work will help other Pacific island countries work towards the ratification of CEDAW. In this regard, representatives from other Pacific Island countries were invited to the project's concluding meeting in Suva so they could discuss how they too might promote the acceptance of women's fundamental rights. Country reports of Federated States of Micronesia and Solomon Islands, which are included in this publication, tell us the situation of women and their efforts toward the ratification of CEDAW in their countries.

All four project countries have successfully mobilized their networks and created unique and useful information materials in the course of conducting their own national workshops. Throughout the project, participants learned valuable lessons regarding the promotion of CEDAW by women's NGOs. By sharing these in this publication, they and ESCAP, hope to help others who wish to become strong advocates of women's basic rights.

ESCAP wishes to convey its appreciation to the Government of Japan which made this project possible through generous funding support.



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ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community-based organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCAP/POC	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific/Pacific Operations Centre
FSP	Foundation for Peoples of the South Pacific
FWCW	Fourth World Conference on Women
FWRM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
GO	Governmental organization
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
LRTO	Legal Rights Training Officer
NCD	National Capital District
NCW	National Council of Women
NFLS	Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women toward the Year 2000
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PFA	Platform for Action
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PPA	Pacific Plan of Action
PWRB	Pacific Women's Resource Bureau (in the Secretariat of the Pacific Community)
RRRT	Pacific Regional Human Rights Education Resource Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USP	University of the South Pacific
VNCW	Vanuatu National Council of Women
WINAP	Women's Information Network for Asia and the Pacific
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

INTRODUCTION

Over the years NGOs have been recognized as significant players in the global attempt to ensure gender equality and sustainable development. They have played a valuable role in facilitating the promotion of CEDAW, particularly at the grass-roots level. In view of the significant roles NGOs have played in advancing women's basic rights, ESCAP has found it essential to cooperate with NGOs in the promotion and implementation of CEDAW.

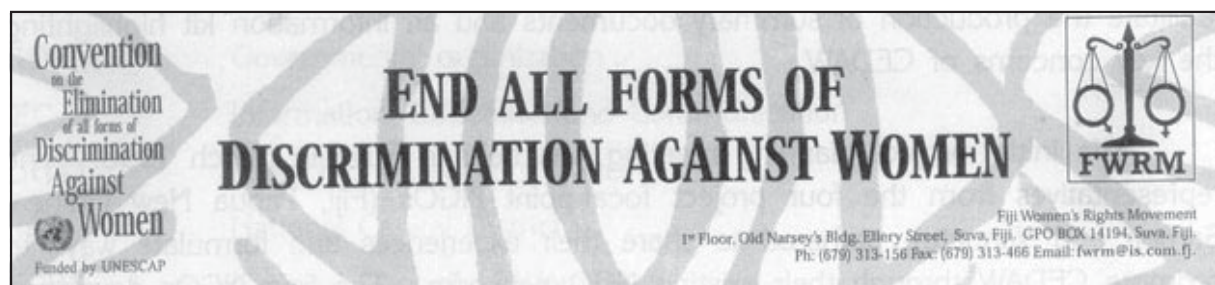
The project, "Promotion of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through NGO networks in the Pacific" was initiated in early 1998 to address the critical problems faced by grass-roots women in the Pacific island countries. It was intended to strengthen the capacity of gender-focused NGOs in collaborating with each other in communicating and delivering programmes at the field level. In addition, the project was intended to facilitate the production of summary documents and an information kit highlighting the key concerns of CEDAW.

The initial project planning meeting was held in Suva in March 1998. The representatives from the four project focal-point NGOs (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu), gathered to share their experiences and formulate ways to promote CEDAW through their existing NGO networks. The four NGOs developed their plans after extensive brainstorming and discussion on (1) target groups/areas/topics, (2) means of communication, and (3) coordination with other national government agencies and NGOs.

Based on the above agenda, each country set their own priorities and goals regarding their critical areas of concern. During the planning meeting, it was emphasized that project activities should be planned in conjunction with other CEDAW-promoting activities which were already in place. Thus the project could capitalize on plans already in place, while saving on human resources and production costs.

After the project planning meeting in Suva, each country brought their project plans home and implementation began. Each country utilized the same three-phase plan for their project. First, the implementing NGO organized national workshops which brought together national NGOs, grassroots NGOs, and Government agencies. During those national meetings, an information kit was designed to meet the country's prioritized project objectives. Second, the information kit was finalized and produced by the project's implementing NGO. In the third phase, the information kit was disseminated to target groups through established NGO networks.

At the end of the project, a subregional meeting was held in Suva to share the project outcomes with other Pacific island countries. During the subregional meeting, participants made recommendations for further promotion of CEDAW through NGO networks. These recommendations coincide with those being used to promote women's rights all around the world. The publication presented here, therefore, is intended for women's organizations and individuals who are networking at all levels in promoting the advancement of women's rights.



Chapter One

PLANNING MEETING



The planning meeting for the project was held on 10 and 11 March 1998 in Suva, Fiji. Participants included representatives from the four project countries: Fiji (the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, the Fiji National Council of Women and the YWCA), Papua New Guinea (the National Council of Women), Samoa (Mapusaga O Aiga). Although there was a participant from Vanuatu, a focal point NGO had not been identified by the time of the planning meeting. Observers included representatives from the Pacific Regional Human Rights Education Resource Team (RRRT), the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Community (formerly the South Pacific Commission).

CEDAW IN THE PACIFIC

Ratification and implementation of CEDAW is considered a top priority in many women's groups in the Pacific. RRRT has been promoting CEDAW to government bodies and non-government women's organizations in the subregion. The Director of RRRT supported ESCAP's initiative to assist NGOs in promoting CEDAW, and he agreed to support the ESCAP project as needed. Accordingly, the project planning meeting was held in RRRT's meeting room in Suva. Basic secretarial services for the meeting were also provided by RRRT.

The objective of the meeting was to pool together the experiences and materials of NGOs which had been promoting CEDAW, and also to plan project activities. During the meeting, intense discussion determined which issues of CEDAW should be prioritized to suit each country's context, and which targets should be set. The project's approach emphasized: (1) NGOs networking to reach targets; and (2) building a sense of ownership of the project by sharing information about the process of producing materials.

At the beginning of the meeting, ESCAP made a presentation on the background and objective of the project. Because the project's approach (i.e., using IEC materials to promote CEDAW through NGO networks) had already been implemented by ESCAP in South Asia, the experiences of South Asian NGOs were shared along with examples of the IEC materials they had developed. However the South Asia NGO Project promoted the Beijing Platform for Action, while the South Pacific project would promote CEDAW.

The project's participating countries are all island countries and the cost of transportation, therefore, is generally high compared to other ESCAP-member countries. To maximize the allocated project funds, all participants agreed to combine ESCAP project activities with their own ongoing CEDAW-related activities. In doing so, funds would be effectively utilized to reach target beneficiaries. This would also allow more resources for producing IEC materials.

COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

The project focal-points were leading NGOs in their countries and had already been promoting CEDAW and monitoring its implementation. Sharing their experiences benefited all participants. It was particularly useful for representatives of countries which had yet to ratify CEDAW to hear what steps other countries had taken to achieve this.

Fiji

Fiji was represented by three organizations: the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), which would serve as the ESCAP project focal point, the Fiji National Council of Women and the Fiji YWCA. FWRM's representative began by explaining Fiji's steps towards ratifying CEDAW. The first national workshop on CEDAW was organized in 1992 when a CEDAW Secretariat was formed. During this workshop, FWRM was appointed as the NGO focal-point on CEDAW. CEDAW was ratified in 1995, just before the Beijing Conference, but with two reservations. Ratification was largely the result of the efforts of NGOs which had been lobbying parliament with open letters. Since ratification, NGOs have been working for the removal of the two reservations. To promote CEDAW awareness, FWRM refers to CEDAW in their IEC materials on women's rights promotion. In order to remove the reservations, FWRM, in collaboration with other NGOs, had been sending open letters to all Members of Parliament and holding open forums. Fiji's experiences with ratification and reservation-removal campaigns provided a good example to representatives from countries which had not ratified CEDAW (Cook Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu). In Fiji, CRC had been ratified without reservation.

A representative of both the YWCA and the Fiji National Council of Women explained the activities of these two organizations. The YWCA committee was established in 1992 and now has five branches in the country. The YWCA had been implementing legal literacy programmes at the community level through all its branches. One of the characteristics of Fiji is that there are two major ethnic groups in the country (Fijian and Indian) and activities must be tailored for each group. In general, Fijian rural society is community based whereas Indian rural society is settlement based. This difference requires community workers to take different approaches in implementing projects.

The National Council of Women has a strong network throughout the country. Encouraging political participation of women is one of the major activities of many women's organizations in Fiji.

Papua New Guinea (PNG)

The representative from the National Council of Women (NCW) and the PNG Council of Churches made a presentation on NGO activities, as well as on the Government's implementation of CEDAW.

Non-government organizations' involvement

While the Government Focal Point Committee is in the process of operationalizing CEDAW, since 1979, the NGOs in Papua New Guinea have tried to: (1) raise women's awareness of their rights – especially in the areas where laws/legislation have discriminated against women or where laws/legislation have marginalized women and kept them from participating in economic, social, spiritual and political arenas and (2) conduct awareness programmes which target men and women policy and decision makers.

These awareness programmes have been implemented by churches, NGOs, the Provincial Councils of Women, and the Women in Law Association. The ICRAF Refugee Centre has organized legal workshops throughout the country. Churches and other NGOs have taken on the issue of domestic violence against women, which includes interpretation of laws in these areas. Women's groups also produced and published pamphlets on abortion, alcohol and divorce.

Adultery is illegal in Papua New Guinea; violators must pay K1,000 in compensation. Since 1982, assaults by husbands on wives have been illegal. In 1985, the Law Reform Commission carried out research on domestic violence in Papua New Guinea. The Commission's report was presented to the Government, but no concrete action has ever been taken to date.

NCW is currently examining the impact of the Curators' Office because many women and children have been denied access to their deceased husbands/fathers' estate. Pressure is building in Papua New Guinea for a law against polygamy. NCW is also pursuing the implementation of Section 102 which deals with the nomination of women to the national parliament.

Status report on the implementation of CEDAW by the Government

The Papua New Guinea Government ratified CEDAW in April 1994. Since then the Government has made progress towards establishing an implementing mechanism for this Convention.

The Ministry and Office of Family and Church Affairs houses the national women's machinery and is the Government's implementing agency on CEDAW. In 1996, the national machinery established an inter-agency core committee on CEDAW which includes all relevant government agencies. By early 1997, the committee expanded to include NGOs and representatives from the National Council of Women due to their commitment to women's and human rights issues.

The core committee's primary function is to facilitate inter-agency cooperation towards implementing the Convention, and secondly to provide initial and periodic reports on behalf of the Government to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Currently, the Core Committee is in the process of formulating a national implementation plan on CEDAW. Each sector represented on the core committee has been assigned to analyze existing laws, policies, and practices within their jurisdiction. Reports based on this analysis will form the basis for enacting new laws and policies, as well as for revising laws, policies and practices which are discriminatory.

The first report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is due. A draft report has been prepared and will be submitted both to the Government and to NGOs for their comments and input.

In 1996, Papua New Guinea established a Human Rights Commission which is the overall coordinating agency on all human rights instruments in the country. The National President of NCW is a member of the Commission and represents the Government.

Samoa

The coordinator of Mapusaga O Aiga, which means "family heaven", made a presentation on the country situation and the activities implemented by the organization. The organization started as a monitoring and implementing body for programmes on violence against women. RRRT has been providing technical inputs on women's rights issues focused on CEDAW. In Samoa, as well as other Pacific island countries, coordination between the national machinery and women's NGOs is generally good and there is a certain degree of transparency throughout all organizations. For example, the Ministry of Women's Affairs Advisory Committee in Samoa consists of heads of women's NGOs. Women's NGOs have been actively working on issues regarding women and politics since men have historically dominated the country's political arena. In Samoa, one cannot become a Member of Parliament without holding a Matai title, which is given primarily to men. Without changing challenging customs and traditions, women's NGO are promoting women to obtain Matai titles so they can run for elections.

The majority of NGOs are from women's church groups. Mapusaga O Aiga considers it is important to demystify CEDAW at the village level. For this, they have been training community paralegals who can advise villagers on legal issues. There is no domestic violence law in Samoa so promotion of CEDAW on this topic is difficult. Police training about CEDAW, especially regarding domestic violence, is also an important activity for the organization.

Vanuatu

Since the ratification of CEDAW, Vanuatu women's groups have been implementing activities to promote CEDAW, with particular emphasis on violence against women. In rural areas, there is a decision-making mechanism called "men's house", and women are normally excluded from the political arena. The National Council of Women is a major player in promoting women's rights throughout the nation, as it has an extensive network from the national to the community levels.

PRESENTATIONS BY NON-PROJECT-IMPLEMENTING COUNTRIES

Legal Rights Training Officers, who were working with RRRT, made presentations about their countries. These representatives described the progress which has been made towards ratification of CEDAW and other legal rights activities in their countries. These presentations indicated that NGOs and government focal points were working together towards ratification of CEDAW to ensure women had basic human rights.

Tuvalu

Tuvalu has not ratified the Convention to date.¹ A Resolution was submitted in August 1997 by an appointed lawyer who conducted an analysis which was to be a basis for ratifying CEDAW. This analysis indicated that CEDAW did not conflict with current national law. However, to ratify the Convention, policy makers need to know more about CEDAW. Traditionally, women have not been encouraged to take decision-making roles in rural areas. Women are not allowed to speak at meetings and vote only in national elections. However, in recent years, the National Council of Women has become more recognized by the Government as a result of their project achievements. NGOs are also working on women's rights issues, with emphasis on domestic violence, reproductive rights and female labour.

Tonga

Tonga has not ratified CEDAW, but has translated it in order to support issues addressing women, especially issues about criminal assault at home. Women's groups have been submitting petitions to the Government on CEDAW-related issues. There is a need to sensitize the police force regarding women's human rights. In cooperation with Nanga Farua, which means "building a nation" and is one of the major women's NGOs in Tonga, a Legal Rights Training Officer with RRRT has been working with a female police inspector to promote awareness of CEDAW among police personnel.

Cook Islands

The Cook Islands ratified CEDAW through New Zealand. While there is a population of 9,000 in the country's capital, many people have had no choice but to migrate to New Zealand after the Government cut 2,000 jobs. This affected women, even more than men. The first local women's NGO was established in 1992, and since then, NGO networking has been important. Law enforcement agencies such as the police and the judicial department need training to make staff aware of women's rights, in particular in the areas of matrimonial rights and family law.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Guidelines about how to conduct the planned project were explained by the ESCAP staff member who coordinated the meeting. Afterwards, extensive brainstorming sessions were held regarding: (a) target groups/areas/topics, (b) means of communication, and (c) coordination with other national GOs and NGOs.

¹ However, on 6 October 1999, Tuvalu ratified CEDAW.

Target identification

Target groups

Initially, participants recommended targeting grassroots women in rural and urban areas. They also wanted to target decision makers at all levels (village, provincial, and national) because they have a strong influence on communities. There is a tremendous need in the Pacific to raise awareness about women's issues and about CEDAW among policy makers. One cannot ignore the influence of church groups in Pacific island countries, and thus it is crucial to involve these groups in the project implementation process, particularly in information-dissemination activities.

At the end of the brainstorming and discussion session, target groups were identified as follows:

Grass-roots women: female workers, village women, etc.

Decision makers/opinion leaders: church groups, police forces at different levels, parliament members, politicians, media workers, village councils, teacher's associations, and government officers.

Keeping in mind the above list, time and financial constraints, each project focal-point was asked to prioritize their target groups.

Topics

Because each project focal-point has its own ongoing activities concerning CEDAW and its own organizational priorities, the topics identified for the project were diverse. While it is important to educate policy makers about CEDAW in general, participants agreed that concentrating on specific articles of CEDAW would be more effective and efficient. The topics which were considered most important were: CEDAW (as an overall issue), women's economic rights, women's legal status and legal reality, women's political participation and gender-based violence.

Geographical areas

All project countries are made up of scattered islands and, given the allocated funds, it would be impossible to cover an entire country. Accordingly, all focal-points decided to target certain geographical areas, based on their ongoing CEDAW-related activities.

Tools

During the brainstorming session on communications tools, unique ideas were suggested. In reviewing possible communications tools, consideration was given to cultural appropriateness, and available time and funds. The following tools were considered the most appropriate for the project:

Paintings, Folk songs, TV spots, Radio programmes, Handicrafts, Posters, Placemats, Tea towels, T-shirts, Stickers, Theatres, Celebrities/Personalities, Booklets, Pocket notes, Bus tickets, Sulu (a large scarf used for dressing), Puppets, Linen (Table clothes, Bed covers, etc.), Poems, Dances, Teaching aids, etc.

Collaboration with the Pacific Community

The head of PWRB (the Pacific Women's Resource Bureau), who represented the Pacific Community at the meeting, promised her organization's support for the project as a partner agency. As a Pacific regional organization, the Pacific Community has initiated many activities to promote CEDAW and it has an extensive network of government agencies, as well as NGOs. Accordingly, the cooperation of the Pacific Community in this project is a crucial factor for success in promoting CEDAW. The representative mentioned that the Pacific Community could contribute to the project by providing technical support. This could include sending a media expert to the project focal-points workshops as well some material support (providing access to the Pacific Community's in-house printing facility).

Work programme

Each project focal-point made a draft project plan of activities based on the guidelines developed at the meeting. After initial planning, presentations were made in order to solicit comments and facilitate information exchange. Valuable comments came from participants and experts, including observers from the University of South Pacific and RRRT/LRTOs. During the presentation and subsequent discussions, some useful comments were made. For example, television broadcasting covers wider audiences and has greater visual impact, but it does not necessarily reach specific target groups and its production costs are generally high. The use of television, however, could be effective to reach decision makers if these decision makers were mobilized for TV debate/panel discussions. Political sensitivity could be a critical issue, especially when mobilized target group women face conflict with their superiors over issues such as labour rights.

The ability of participants to draft IEC materials was also raised during the discussion. Participants agreed that collaboration with experts was essential, and for this, the Pacific Community's offer of technical support was much appreciated.

Budget

The Budget instalment plan was decided as follows:

- (1) US\$3,000 to organize national/provincial level workshops. These workshops would assist in forming or strengthening NGO coalitions which would launch collective action plans and discuss ways to promote and implement CEDAW. During the workshop(s), IEC materials targeted at grass-roots NGOs and/or law enforcement agencies would be designed.
- (2) US\$4,000 for printing or producing the IEC materials.
- (3) US\$2,000 to promote their distribution to grass-roots NGOs and/or law enforcement agencies, and
- (4) US\$1,000 for the project follow up.

Total project budget for each country: US\$10,000.

COUNTRY PROJECT PLANS

Fiji

CEDAW Article 11: The right to work as a human right

- Topics:
1. Making CEDAW work for you
 2. Domestic work is work (Legislative change)
 3. Employment (FWRM)
- Targets:
- NGOs
 - Government, Members of Parliament
 - International agencies
- Tools:
- Lobbying kit
 - Tea towels
 - Posters, postcards, newspaper supplements
 - Workshops (3 centres: Lautoka, Labasa and Suva)
 - NGO coalition group
- Activities:
- National workshop/meeting
 - Reporting
 - IEC workshop
 - Creation of materials
 - Production: focal-point's responsibility
 - Distribution: dissemination through workshops; incorporated into family law programme support
 - Subregional: NGO coalition on human rights; FWRM workshops

Topic 1: Making CEDAW work for you

- Target groups: NGOs, Government, Members of Parliament
- Objectives:
- To disseminate information on the CEDAW report and highlight legislation that discriminates against women e.g. Employment
 - Domestic violence
 - Sexual assault
- National workshop: A one day workshop on CEDAW, outlining the current status, the situation and what legislative changes are required

Topic 2: Domestic work is work

- Target groups: Peri urban – women in harvest homes, labour officials
- Tools: Workshop, seminars/group discussions, posters

Topic 3: Employment

- Target groups: NGOs – International agencies and government focal points

National workshops: can use NGO coalition groups and the National Council of Women

Tools:

- Lobbying kit
- Posters/Cards

Channels:

- NGOs
- Government Members of Parliament
- Ministry of Labour
- Attorney General's Office

Papua New Guinea

Project title: Promotion of women in politics (National Parliament)
(Art. 7 CEDAW)

Project objective: To gain support of the community at large to urge the Government to mobilize women's participation in the formal decision-making process (Parliament) in order to represent the views of women

Project's immediate objectives:

- Implementation of Section 102 of the Papua New Guinea National Constitution
- Review of the current women's machinery

Intended impacts:

- Strengthened women's voice at the national decision-making level
- Strengthened the mechanism to deliver services to women

Activities:

1. National workshops – participants from national-level NGOs based in NCD and technical experts
2. Community competition
 - Posters
 - Poems
 - Songs
 - Short stories
3. Follow-up workshop/seminar
 - Technical experts
 - Contract officers
4. Printing
5. Launching of materials
6. Distribution of materials

Samoa

One-day national workshop (1st workshop)

Objectives and expected outcome: Provide issue-specific CEDAW awareness promotion and gather ideas on IEC materials

Date: Mother's day, May 1998 (public holiday)

Number of participants: 20-25

Identified groups:

- Komiti Tuirama
- Soroptimist
- Teachers Association
- Nurses Association
- National Council of Churches Women's Fellowship
- Council of Catholic Churches Women's Fellowship
- Catholic Women's Fellowship
- Methodist Women's Fellowship
- National Council of Women
- Other Churches Women Fellowship

National workshop (2nd workshop)

Objectives and expected outcome: Review IEC materials drafted at the first workshop and provide legal input to the materials for finalization.

Date: June 1998

Target participants: Law enforcement groups

Number of participants: 12-15

Identified groups:

- Law society, judiciary
- Police
- Politicians
- Government

(1) Script person – lawyer

(2) Media – putting information into readable forms

(3) Draft copy – perused for input (assistance required for artists to layout/design)

(4) Final copy – printers

Other planned activities

- (1) Draft copy of material and reporting at the subregional meeting: July 1998
- (2) Final copy of IEC materials to printers: August 1998
- (3) Launch IEC material during the national workshops (targeted between 25 November and 10 December 1998)
- (4) Public awareness programmes – church, school, community
- (5) Lobbying politicians to take up issues

Chapter Two

COUNTRY ACTIVITY REPORTS²

FIJI

Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM)
1st Floor, Old Narsey's Building
Ellery Street
Suva, Fiji

Tel: (679) 313-156
Fax: (679) 313-466



Fiji Women's Rights Movement was established in 1986 by a group of women who were concerned about discrimination against women and inadequate protection of women's rights. In order to redress the imbalances of women's socio-economic and political status, FWRM has been actively campaigning and lobbying for legislative and attitudinal change in Fiji.



² The views expressed in these country reports may not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.

INTRODUCTION

FWRM has been acting as the Fiji NGO focal point (Secretariat) for CEDAW and was set up to lobby the Government to ratify the Convention. Following Fiji's ratification of CEDAW, the Secretariat's main task has been shifted to monitor the reporting process. The main objective of this project was to empower women at the grass-roots level by enhancing their knowledge of and access to legal rights. This would enable women to be integrated in all aspects of the development process. FWRM believed that the project would help draw attention to the status of CEDAW, develop useful materials for its promotion and serve as an avenue in addressing how CEDAW could be used as an advocacy tool for policy makers.

PLANNING MEETING

At the planning meeting held on 11 and 12 March 1998, FWRM felt that it would be important to streamline activities in line with the current projects conducted by FWRM. The two main projects were the Women's Employment and Economic Rights Project and the National Legal Literacy Project. The aim of the former project is to address discriminatory practices in the formal paid sector and improve the working conditions of women. The latter project's objective is to raise awareness within the community of women's legal rights, especially those concerning family law.

At the planning meeting, FWRM decided that a national workshop should be held with women's organizations to outline the current status of CEDAW and explain how the project could assist FWRM in preparing promotional materials. The reason for holding the national workshop was to ensure that more groups were aware of the Project and to disseminate information on CEDAW. Furthermore, FWRM felt that it was important for FWRM to use article 11 from CEDAW, which covers employment, to address the issue of women's unpaid work at home. At the planning stage, the use of lobbying kits, posters, and cards were deemed suitable. However these were tentative suggestions, and it was felt that a one-day workshop should be held to get further input from other organizations working on CEDAW promotion in the country. The planning meeting was an opportunity for the CEDAW Secretariat to discuss the direction of the project and how it would fit with the main objectives of the organization.

Following the planning meeting, the FWRM Coordinator outlined the suggested activities to FWRM's collective. While the collective tentatively approved this, FWRM lacked the necessary resources to organize a national workshop. FWRM staff were already busy with their own individual projects and could not devote the necessary time to it. To overcome this problem, FWRM decided to use volunteers to assist in coordinating the project. FWRM was fortunate that a trained lawyer from the University of the South Pacific and a financial advisor offered their assistance in organizing the workshop. They, in concert with FWRM staff, formed an organizing committee.

NATIONAL WORKSHOP

The workshop was held from 14 to 16 September 1998. It was attended by 25 participants who came mainly from women's organizations and law enforcement agencies such as the Police and the Public Prosecution's Office. The main aim of the workshop was to create awareness about CEDAW and assist organizations in developing promotional material on CEDAW.

The Director of the Ministry of Women and Culture opened the workshop and in her address stated that CEDAW's ratification needed to be considered in the context of the Government's total development efforts concerning women. As examples, she mentioned the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution, the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the policies and strategies outlined in policy documents such as the Opportunities for Growth and Development Strategy (1997). She further stated that since the ratification of CEDAW and CRC, as well as other international conventions, the Government had taken specific measures such as a review of family law and labour law to address inequalities faced by women. She also mentioned that the Government was considering setting up a task force of NGOs and government organizations to advise on procedures for reporting on CEDAW compliance and that they expected to submit their initial report at the end of the year.

Following this address, a session was held on Women's Human Rights and CEDAW. In this session, it was explained that most violations of women's rights occur in the private sphere where the state claims it has no responsibility. Women's activists and human rights groups state however that "the personal is political" and that the state must be held accountable for actions that violate women's rights in the private sphere. It was also mentioned that CEDAW is indeed a valuable tool for change and the history of ratifying CEDAW was summarized. The Fiji CEDAW Secretariat used the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing to pressure the Government to ratify CEDAW. The Fiji Government ratified with two reservations: one on article 9 and the other on 5a. However, since the new 1997 Constitution has come into effect, the reservation concerning article 9 had been lifted and the reservation concerning article 5a is in the process of being lifted.

As some participants had not heard of CEDAW, the planning committee decided to provide more background on CEDAW. A trainer from RRRT gave a comprehensive overview of the Convention and the difference between national and international laws. One question asked was whether CEDAW was a western document and whether it had any relevance in a developing country such as Fiji. The trainer replied that this was a common argument used to negate the value of CEDAW, and that CEDAW was actually borne out of the efforts of women activists in both developing and developed countries. CEDAW is a valuable guiding document that sets principles for establishing and furthering women's human rights. The trainer then gave an in-depth background on how CEDAW had been used in the courts and in changing policy, conduct and practices.



The second day of the workshop was opened with a review of the previous day and the Director of Public Prosecutor's Office (DPP) gave a reflection of her work in the DPP's office and how CEDAW could be used to change domestic laws. She discussed how her own experience as a prosecutor in rape trials had shown her that the laws were inadequate and needed to be changed.

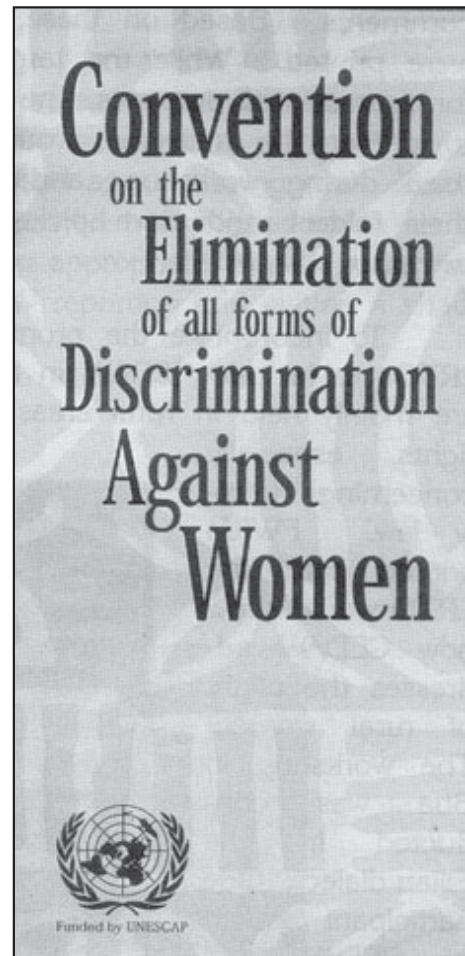
Following this presentation, key speakers covered violence against women, employment and family law. Each speaker gave a background to the situation in Fiji, the major issues and what could be done to address problems. Sub-groups were then formed according to interest and asked to brainstorm how CEDAW could be used in rectifying particular problems. During lunch on the Day Two, Women's Action for Change was invited to perform a community play. This alternative form of communication was used to show how drama groups could be used to get across messages to the community.

Day Three commenced with an overview of the previous day's session and a representative from the South Pacific Community Media Unit discussed ways of communicating and promoting CEDAW to various community groups. He outlined the need for participants to consider both their target audiences and the messages they were trying to communicate. He further outlined that the message must be simple and that materials for promotion must be ones that could be utilized by the target group. He outlined key techniques in communication and gave some valuable advice for addressing problems. The participants identified the areas, target audiences and modes of communication and it was agreed that FWRM would manage production using these action plans. Participants also agreed to raise the issue of CEDAW within their own programmes and organizations.

PROJECT OUTCOME

The following are the results of the project outcome. Several targets were identified and strategies were made according to each target group. General promotion of CEDAW was directed at secondary school and university students and educational pamphlets were produced and distributed to community organizations. The project achievements are summarized as follow:

- ❖ Stickers – produced and distributed
- ❖ Group discussion incorporated within workshops on:
 - WIP Project (1998)
 - University of the South Pacific (8 April 1999)
 - RRRT/LRTOs (14 April 1999)
 - FWCC regional training (27th April 1999)
- ❖ Poster on women's human rights – produced in three languages
- ❖ Radio programme planned (not yet achieved – awaiting information from Wan Smolbag employment rural women and to focus on women's unpaid work, Article 11)
- ❖ Bookmarks – produced
- ❖ Poverty-rural women and to focus on Article 14 workshops, CEDAW and Family Law Legal Literacy Workshop, Bua (1-5 March 1999)
- ❖ Stickers – produced and distributed
- ❖ Radio programme by Radio Pacifik:
 - Violence – men and women promotional material from the FWCC
 - Political participation – Women voters posters produced and distributed



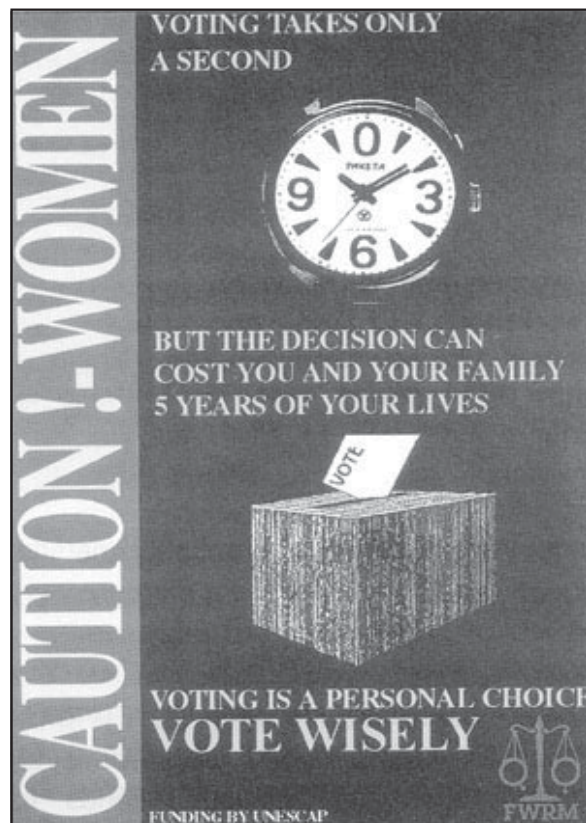
At the end of the September workshop, FWRM decided to integrate CEDAW promotion within its regular work programme and projects. At the beginning of 1999, FWRM managed to obtain funds for a communications officer under the Women's Employment and Economic Rights Project. The organization then decided that since the volunteers who had organized the initial project workshop were now working and could not devote much time to the project, the new communications officer would take on coordination of the project.

For general promotional material on CEDAW, the Communications Officer, the WEER Project Officer and the Coordinator decided that the target audience would be university students and secondary school students. In a brainstorming session they decided that bookmarks and stickers would be very effective, especially at the beginning of the school year. A brochure outlining the CEDAW articles was also developed. After working on the drafts, it was decided that the same format and pattern should be used for the stickers, bookmarks and brochures. The drafts were then circulated to university students for their

comments. Based on these, some adjustments were made and the materials were printed. While the target group was university students, it was felt that for promotional purposes, the network of women's organizations should be used to deliver the materials around the country. The materials have since been used during workshops and seminars. Students have used the stickers on their folders and have picked up the brochures at booths and promotional workshops.

To incorporate the promotion of CEDAW within projects, FWRM asked the LRTOs to include CEDAW in her 5-day legal literacy programme. Her workshops are mainly held in rural areas and are used to create awareness about women's rights, especially concerning family law. FWRM agreed that the LRTO would show how CEDAW addresses the plight of rural women. The workshop in Bua was conducted in the Fijian dialect. One participant asked how CEDAW could be used as a tool for change of women in rural areas. The LRTO discussed how CEDAW had already been used to change family law and labour law

and how these changes would affect women in rural areas. Participants were told that advocacy groups and women's organizations had lobbied hard for changes to family law. It was noted that the Fiji Law Reform Commission has published a report on Family Law and if all the recommendations are approved by the cabinet, real changes should occur in the law.



In preparing the posters on political participation, in the lead up to the election, the coordinating committee felt that women should be encouraged to vote wisely in the elections. For the first time, at least 22 women were planning to run in the various political parties. A catchy slogan was created "Vote women, vote wisely" which was pre-tested in the community. The posters were distributed during the election campaign and political parties were asked to display them around their booths. During distribution of the poster, some representatives of political parties complained that the poster was discriminatory and that it conflicted with the positions of some parties. FWRM responded that the aim of the poster was to prompt voters to vote wisely and that it was important to vote for women because women are under-represented at the highest levels of decision-making.

SUMMARY

FWRM benefited enormously from the project because materials that promoted CEDAW also promoted FWRM. There was increased awareness of critical issues facing women and how CEDAW could be used as a lobbying tool. Furthermore the promotional material was effectively pre-tested before production so that participants gained skills in reviewing and preparing appropriate material. In future FWRM will consider developing a project on CEDAW reporting and writing a shadow (alternative) report.



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

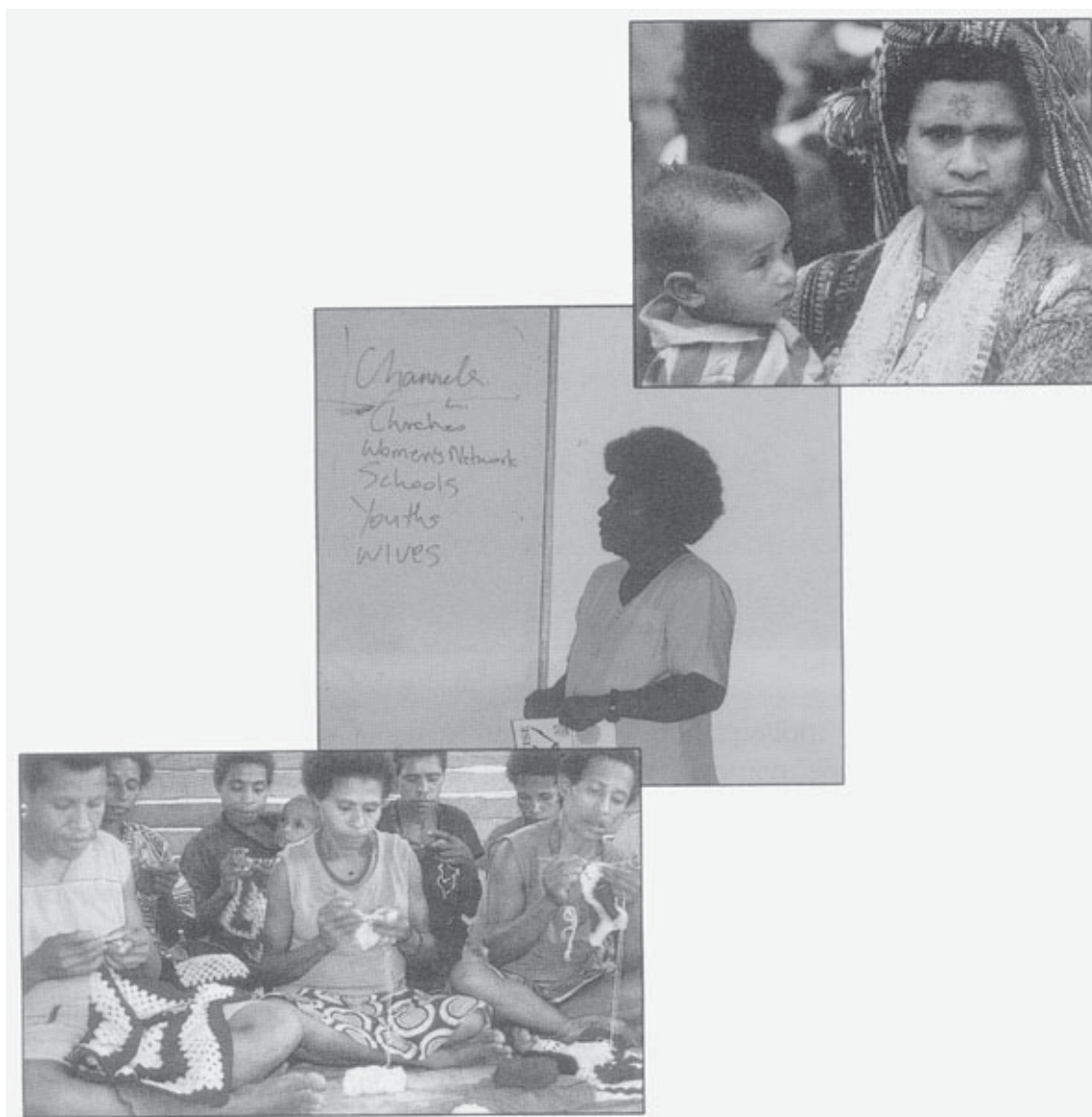
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National Council of Women of Papua New Guinea was established in 1979, aiming to improve the status of women so that they can be equal partners in the development process of Papua New Guinea. Its main objectives include encouraging and providing opportunities for mutual understanding among women in the country and representing the view of all levels of women and to publicize those views where it sees fit.



INTRODUCTION

Papua New Guinea (PNG) lies in the Pacific Ocean, south of equator. Its people are predominantly Melanesian, but a smaller population of Polynesians live in some coastal areas. There are both matrilineal and patrilineal societies in Papua New Guinea. The matrilineal societies are found in East New Britain (Tolai), New Ireland, Bougainville and Milne Bay. Societies in the rest of the country are patrilineal.

The population of Papua New Guinea is estimated to be 4,500,000 and growing at a rate of 2.3 per cent. The country is still very much rural, so as expected, 80 per cent of its population still live in the countryside where life is sustained through subsistence agriculture.

CEDAW and the PNG Government

Papua New Guinea signed the CEDAW Document in 1994. The Government felt obliged to ratify CEDAW without reservation to enable Papua New Guinea's women to participate in the United Nations Fourth World Conference in Beijing.

After having ratified CEDAW, the Government appointed the Women's Division of the Office of Family and Church Affairs to operationalize it. To date, the Office has developed a strategy to implement CEDAW, but has lacked resources and support from both the Government and non-governmental organizations.

Prior to the ESCAP project to promote CEDAW, many NGOs, including the National Council of Women (NCW), assumed that the promotion of CEDAW was the responsibility of the Government.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

Papua New Guinea's representatives at the Suva planning meeting chose *Politics and Public Life* as the theme to emphasize. On arrival back at PNG, a special submission was made to the PNG National Council of Women during a workshop held by the Council at Mount Hagen, in the Western Highlands.

1st Workshop: Women's rights are human rights

Date: 10 August 1998

The NCW Executive Committee decided to put planning for the project on the agenda for the NCW Special Consultation Programme. The programme was planned for one day and included the 20 provincial presidents of NCW, 18 presidents of affiliated organizations, 20 government women's officers and 30 observers.

Purpose of the workshop

The basic purpose of introducing the project was to bring it to the attention of the members of the PNG National Council of Women so that they could:

- ❖ Identify areas of CEDAW that NCW needed to promote.
- ❖ Suggest how NCW should go about achieving the objectives of CEDAW.

The Suva planning meeting participants briefed about the project plan which was drafted at the planning meeting:

- ❖ Identify and create awareness about the articles of CEDAW through the NCW Network through organizations, groups and individuals that interact with NCW.
- ❖ Bring the CEDAW Articles identified for promotion to an Artists Workshop which was to be organized by NCW.

To familiarize participants on CEDAW issues, articles of CEDAW were distributed among participants along with sheets of blank butcher paper (flip chart paper). The participants were divided into regional groups for discussion and later each group made a presentation on the result of discussion.

Group reports

Group one: Highlands Regions

Recommendation: CEDAW Working Committees are to be established in all provinces and these committees shall consist of representatives from the government departments responsible for health, justice and welfare, as well as the churches, NGOs, the private sector and the community.

Plan of Action:

- ❖ Training and awareness should be carried out by women working in NGOs, churches and relevant government departments.
- ❖ The project should target decision-making bodies such as the Ward Councillors, local-level governments, and the provincial governments.
- ❖ NCW is to recruit a legal adviser to advise on matters relating to the legal implications of CEDAW.

Materials: CEDAW Articles identified for promotion through advocacy and development of information, education and communications (IEC) materials were:

- ❖ Article 6 (Suppressing all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women): Create awareness among women of the importance of supporting each other and support sex workers' organizations.
- ❖ Article 11 (Rights to work): Review family laws and strengthen the law and provide resources to strengthen the welfare service.
- ❖ Article 15 (Equality before the law).
- ❖ Article 16 (Marriage and family law).

Group two: New Guinea Islands and Momase regions

Priority areas:

- ❖ Articles 2, 3 and 4 (Measures to implement CEDAW): Research and identify customs that discriminate against women. Assess the issue of women's land rights. Review caution/legislate against discriminatory practices.
- ❖ Article 5 (Sex role stereotyping): Eliminate polygamy. Legislate to ensure punishment for serious crimes such as rape, incest, murder, etc.
- ❖ Article 7 (Political and public life): Advocate that more women be nominated as members of provincial assemblies, local-level governments and Ward Development Committees, as specified by the Organic Law which governs provincial governments.
- ❖ Article 16 (Marriage and family law): Child Welfare Services should be strengthened and fully resourced by the Government. Legislation should be reviewed, especially the Marriage Act, Properties Act, Desertion Act and the Child Welfare Act.

Group three: Papua regions

Priority areas:

- ❖ Article 10 (Education and training).
- ❖ Article 14 (Rural women): Training and education should be provided for the women who are nominated as members of provincial assemblies, local-level governments and Ward Development Committees.
- ❖ Article 16 (Marriage and family law): Review current legislation.

At the end of the meeting, participants made the following conclusions:

- ❖ Women expressed disappointment that the CEDAW document was never brought to their attention before.
- ❖ The Council should take initiatives to promote CEDAW to those in decision-making position in order to gain support for women's programmes etc.
- ❖ It was recommended that since there was no time for participants to develop a poster etc., that NCW and the Women's Division organize an Artist Workshop for three days. It was anticipated that through this workshop, artists would use their imaginations and skills to create songs, poems, posters and short stories.
- ❖ The participants also agreed that NCW revises and reproduces the pamphlets that Women in Law produced in the 1980s.

The CEDAW Articles identified for promotion through advocacy and development of IEC materials were as follows:

- ❖ Articles 2, 3 and 4 focused on law and policy
- ❖ Article 5 focused on violence against women
- ❖ Article 6 focused on exploitation
- ❖ Article 7 focused on political and public life
- ❖ Article 10 focused on education and training
- ❖ Article 11 focused on employment
- ❖ Article 14 focused on rural women
- ❖ Article 15 focused on equality before the law
- ❖ Article 16 focused on marriage and family

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES

Article 7: Political and public life

Lobbying for the implementation of section 102

This was a joint effort between NCW, Women in Politics and the Women's Division. NCW formed a committee of public servants and NGOs that endorsed the development of two types of materials that could be used to lobby and create awareness on the issue. These were:

- ❖ A poster that showed the various stages of the development of section 102. PNG National Constitution states that the National Parliament can, from time to time, appoint three people from the community. The PNG National Council of Women wanted to use the provision to appoint women to the National Parliament since very few women have been elected as members.
- ❖ A poster with the slogan WOMEN CAN. This has now been adopted by the Council as its motto. These posters were distributed to all national politicians.
- ❖ A song was adopted from Our Women Song and used to promote women's issues.
- ❖ Pamphlets and booklets were developed to lobby for nominating the national president of the PNG National Council of Women to Parliament. These were distributed to all national politicians, department secretaries, NGOs and churches.

After the project implementation, the National Executive Council deliberated on section 102 and agreed that a Member of Parliament should take the matter to the national Parliament as a Private Members Bill. It is now on the agenda for debate. Awareness about the issue appears to have grown. Both churches and youth

organizations have been asking for implementation of section 102. Women in NCD have been following the issue with interest and during debates in Parliament over section 102, hundreds of women attended the Parliamentary sessions.

Political and public life

The PNG National Council of Women lobbied the Government to include a provision in the Organic Law that would create positions for nominated women in both the provincial assemblies and the local-level governments. Twenty women have been appointed to provincial assemblies, 544 women to local-level governments and over 5,000 women to Ward Development Committees.

Training

Now that these women have been appointed, the Council is cooperating with the PNG Women in Politics (WIP) to provide training on Good Governance. WIP is in the process of developing a training package on good governance which will be used for political training at all levels.

Articles 2, 3, 4 and 5: Law, policy and violence against women

The PNG Women in Law Committee comprises women who are community workers, social workers and lawyers. To create awareness about legal rights and to protect women against violence, the Committee developed the following materials:

- ❖ Pamphlets on various legal issues: Maintenance and custody of children, deserted women and children, alcohol, rape, etc.
- ❖ New laws changed or created with the assistance from the Law Reform Commission. Domestic violence is now illegal in Papua New Guinea. A poster on domestic violence was also developed and widely distributed to inform the public that it is illegal to beat wives.
- ❖ A video cassette was also produced called “Stap Isi”.
- ❖ Adultery is illegal.

Gender sensitization through role model programme

The Gender Sensitization Programme was developed from a programme initially undertaken by UNFPA in 1996. Both male and female role models were taken to the national high schools to create gender awareness. The programme was so successful that a follow-up programme was planned to sensitize students and teachers in the provincial high schools.

The original objectives of the programme were to:

- ❖ increase the participation of women in non-traditional areas of employment and inform the community about the important contributions that women make.

- ❖ create awareness among teachers and students of gender issues that limit women's opportunities to succeed and to motivate girls to continue with their education.

In its endeavour to implement the national women's policy, the Government has created a Gender Unit within the Department of National Planning and Implementation. Part of this Gender Unit component is implemented within the Department of Home Affairs and Youth.

NCW particularly wanted to encourage young men to seek employment in traditionally female employment areas and to reach parents. Whenever requests come from the communities, NCW makes an effort to meet these in order to raise gender awareness.



Role models

Provincial presidents and women officers who work with the Education In-Service Coordinators were requested to identify role models in their provinces. Efforts were also made to identify role models at the national level who could serve as speakers in the provinces.

Selection of role models

The selection of role models was determined by:

- ❖ the availability of potential role models at the provincial level;
- ❖ the educational qualifications and work experience of potential role models;
- ❖ the occupations of potential role models;
- ❖ the leadership roles that potential role models undertake in their communities;
- ❖ the willingness of potential role models to share their experiences with the students.

In all their talks, role models encourage young men and women to avoid mistakes and take advantage of the opportunities given them. Children were encouraged by these role models to ask questions about gender issues. Children were encouraged by these role models to ask questions about gender issues.

Some of the remarks role model participants made at workshops

"I am not ashamed to tell people that I am a 'house husband'. My wife is very considerate of my needs as a husband and father to the children, and she tries her very best to make things easier for me at home. This, I believe is where men have failed to see the needs of women."

"If you think your father is mistreating your mother, would you want to see your wife treated better and given an opportunity which you would like for your mother, sister or daughter?"

"We cannot all be engineers, doctors, or Department Secretaries, but we are all called to serve our communities in one way or another. Whatever your role, be good at it and do it to the best of your ability."

"We make decisions all the time, at home, at work or at play. These decisions will affect our lives. I stay away from hanging around with too many friends because they can influence my decisions too much."

"I took up Expressive Arts as a major because I wanted to show the boys that this was not just for them. This course was for anybody who has the talent to do it. I had to prove to the boys that I was better than them by scoring straight 'A's. You must know now what you want for yourself or what you want to be in the future and how you intend to achieve this goal."

Role model materials

The role model booklets and the two posters were widely distributed on demand from the Provincial and other schools that were the initial project target groups. The role model documents were also circulated to all provincial high schools and other interested groups. Each school received 20 books, 40 posters (20 each of the two posters) and one video cassette.

Other recipients of the role model materials included the members of the National Council of Women's Network, provincial and vocational schools. This programme was an "eye opener" for many teachers and students, but reactions to the programme were mixed. Some male teachers and male students felt that the programme was passing judgement on behaviour which had previously been acceptable in the community. Others said the programme needed to continue. One of the church leaders said, "We took for granted what we thought was our right. Really we have been unfair to our wives and daughters. This information is so new. Give us time, we cannot change overnight."

Many female teachers realized for the first time the depth of discrimination which occurs in the schools and in the Education Department. Many felt the programme should be part of teachers colleges' syllabuses. Many female teachers admitted that their attitudes need to change too because they direct girls to traditionally-female courses and work around the school. Many teachers asked for the programme to continue and also suggested that community schools and parents be targeted to have more impact.

CONCLUSION

PNG is so diverse that it is very difficult to see the impact that CEDAW has had in influencing the programmes and projects being implemented in the country. CEDAW is being used continuously to lobby the Government, private sector, churches and the public sector to improve the education and job opportunities for women and girls. Although PNG has made some progress, there is still much more to do.



SAMOA

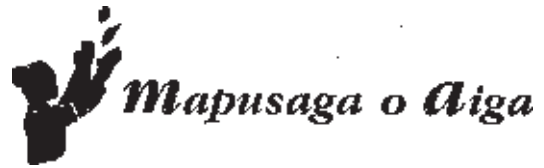
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In 1993, Mapusaga O Aiga was established as a voluntary, non-profit organization in response to the increase in reported cases of domestic and sexual violence in Samoa. The main focus of the organization is the provision of counselling and moral support to victims of violence, the development of its membership and structure and highlighting the issues of domestic and sexual violence. Major costs associated with MOA are funded primarily by foreign donors. Mapusaga O Aiga works closely with the Ministry of Women's Affairs in dealing with matters concerning the women of Samoa. Through this relationship, MOA became the national focal point for promoting CEDAW.



INTRODUCTION

Samoa, as a part of the international community, has participated in several international conferences which addressed the issue of violence against women including the Third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, the Sixth Regional Conference of Pacific Women held in Noumea in 1994, the Ministerial Conference on Women and Sustainable Development also held in Noumea, and the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

Since the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), the elimination of violence against women has been identified as one of the key areas for action. During this period (18 December 1979), the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

This Convention sets out in legally binding form internationally accepted principles and measures to achieve equal rights for women globally. Summarily, CEDAW calls for the equality of women in all fields. The Convention entered into force on 3 September 1981. In July 1992, Samoa ratified the Convention without reservations, becoming the first island in the Pacific region to accept CEDAW.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

National workshops

Mapusaga O Aiga conducted two workshops to promote CEDAW. The first was held in May 1998 and the second in March 1999.

During the workshops, participants were guided by the following questions:

- ❖ In considering the 16 Articles of CEDAW, which would be the most important to promote in Samoa?
- ❖ In designing brochures or pamphlets to promote CEDAW (a) which information should they contain? (b) what should be their focus? (c) what wording would be appropriate in English and Samoan? (d) what other suggestions could be made regarding the design of materials?
- ❖ What other forms of IEC promotional materials should be produced in addition to pamphlets and brochures?

Project implementation

As a result of the workshops, Mapusaga O Aiga wrote, designed and printed two pamphlets to promote CEDAW (one in English and one in Samoan). These explain the function of CEDAW and the articles that specially apply to the rights and obligations of Samoan women, as stated in the Convention. Unfortunately, to date these are the only forms of IEC materials that have been produced and distributed. Due to lack of funding and the unavailability of a layout designer, plans for additional IEC materials have been delayed. These future plans are discussed later in this report.

1st Workshop: Preparatory workshop

The wife of the Minister of Women's Affairs opened the workshop with a prayer. The 20 participants represented various NGOs, including the Pan Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association (PPSEAWA), Soroptimist International, the Samoa Nurses Association, the Western Samoa Teacher's Association, the Public Service Association, the Union of Workers, St Mary's Old Girls' Association, the National Council of Women, Komiti Tumama, Women in Business and Adoptus. A representative from the United Nations Development Programme and from the Ministry of Women's Affairs also attended. Staff from Mapusaga O Aiga helped with facilitating the group work.

The first speaker of morning was the Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who is also the author of the initial and the second country reports on the status of women since ratification of CEDAW. She occupied the first Women's Desk in the Prime Minister's Department in 1979. Issues highlighted in the paper were:

- ❖ The importance of ratifying CEDAW without reservations.
- ❖ The need for maternity leave for women in all sectors.
- ❖ The significance of the Citizenship Amendment Act of 1990.
- ❖ The impact of the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- ❖ The importance of the ratification of CEDAW.
- ❖ A discussion of a significant constitutional case.
- ❖ The impact of culture and tradition concerning the right to vote (generally women have good status).
- ❖ The Ministry of Women's Affairs has agreed to translate and distribute the country reports.
- ❖ The positive results of CEDAW include policy changes.

Actions which still need to be undertaken were identified as follows:

- ❖ Intergovernmental health programmes for women such as cervical cancer, breast cancer
- ❖ Legislation reform
- ❖ Public awareness about the importance of political participation
- ❖ Preparation of a roster of women who are suitable for government appointments
- ❖ Lobbying the Public Service Commission to hire more women and also to appoint them to statutory boards.

Some of the questions raised during the discussion were as follows:

- ❖ Where should NGOs go from here with CEDAW?
- ❖ NGOs should lobby the Ministry of Women's Affairs. CEDAW can only be effective if NGOs back it up.
- ❖ What should be done about teenage pregnancy?

The rights of young women are an important consideration. This ties in with women in business. Samoa has signed CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). CRC will present an even greater challenge than CEDAW because it deals with the rights of children.

One woman asked how could Samoan women be informed about CEDAW and appointed to positions of influence.

A representative from the Western Samoa Teacher's Association asked if there had been any research on discrimination on the basis of sex. The answer was that there is no discrimination when one considers the social and cultural context.

Pan Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association asked about such cultural practices as providing the best food for Alii (high chief) while women get leftovers. In response, she was told that the situation is improving now that many families eat together. However, a recent nutritional status report says that children eat leftovers and this problem needs serious consideration.

The Western Samoa Teacher's Association was asked what their contribution should be and what should be done next. The reply was that the report could not be released as it had to go to cabinet. The National Council of Women asked what the report was based on. The reply was that the report was based on wide consultations with NGOs and a review of reports published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Women in Business asked if there was a chance to contribute to the report. The reply was "Yes". It is hoped that the report would be translated and a workshop held to discuss it. It was also noted that it has been seven years since Samoa signed CEDAW and completion of the report was urgent.

Workshop outcomes

The participants were divided into smaller groups to discuss some of CEDAW's articles and they highlighted three main articles to be promoted in the brochures. These articles were:

- ❖ Article 5 (Sex roles stereotyping)
- ❖ Article 10 (Education and equal learning opportunities)
- ❖ Article 16 (Marriage and family)

2nd Workshop: IEC material creation

The second workshop was held in March 1999 to finalize the selection of the articles to be promoted, and to review the wording of the brochures in both English and Samoan. The workshop was attended by most of the participants from the first workshop and the materials were modified. The staff of Mapusaga O Aiga finalized the text for the brochures and a consultant was hired to design the brochures and supervise their printing.

Mapusaga O Aiga has included information about both CEDAW and CRC in its education and awareness programmes. It is hoped that the new brochures will be launched before the Teuila Festival in September 1999 and that another workshop will be held to launch the brochures and discuss how to further raise awareness in the community.

Report on the 2nd workshop

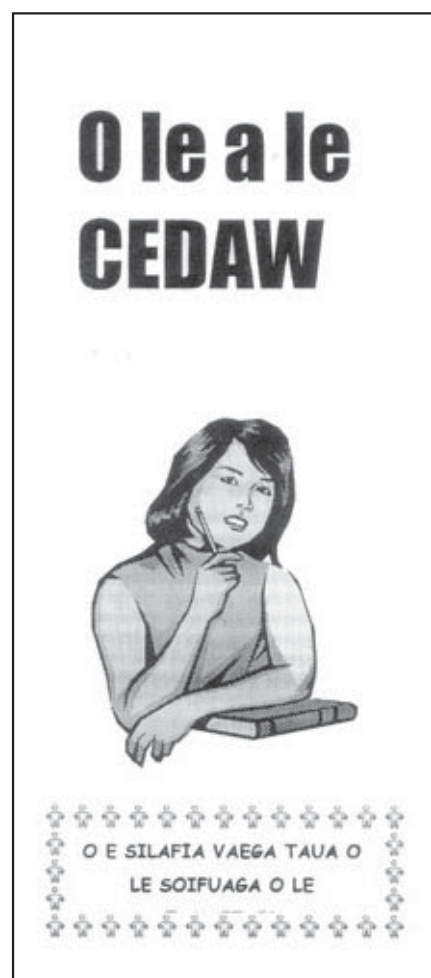
The workshop was held on Friday, 19 March 1999. The wife of the Minister of Women's Affairs began the workshop with a prayer, which was followed by the official opening speech given by Mapusaga O Aiga's president. Some key points made in this speech were:

- ❖ A summary of the progress made within the current framework as a result of ratification of CEDAW.
- ❖ Additional progress made with the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- ❖ A summary of the work done by the Mapusaga O Aiga on the promotion of CEDAW.
- ❖ Follow-up media and panel discussions with regard to issues within CEDAW.

Discussions

The author of Samoa's report on implementation of the CEDAW convention presented the following points to participants:

- ❖ In ratifying CEDAW without reservations, Samoa is perhaps ahead of other countries in making positive changes for women. These include paid maternity leave, equal opportunity employment and equal opportunity education. Although there are other areas covered by CEDAW that still need to be addressed, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Mapusaga O Aiga are working together on resolving these issues.



- ❖ The economic rights of women in Samoa, as covered in Article 5 of the Convention, are slowly but surely being improved. For example, the borrowing rights of women under the National Provident Fund (NPF) are improving with the implementation of a micro-credit scheme organized jointly by Women in Business and the Asian Development Bank.
- ❖ Currently there are no laws against sexual harassment. Therefore there is a need to review legislation pertaining to such crimes. There is also a need to review the role of women in the clergy so that women can seek counsel or comfort from other women.
- ❖ Women in politics and public life (Article 7) – It is very difficult for a woman to become a Matai (village chief). Women who have made significant contributions and achievements may be considered for an appointment, but the standards are higher for women than for men. Matai women would no doubt be a source of important advice regarding success for women in the political arena.
- ❖ Women and employment (Article 11) – Participants questioned why large companies consider pregnancy an excuse to fire women or limit their opportunities for advancement.

Pamphlets and brochures were finalized and copies of the brochures were distributed to participants at the workshop. Participants thought these were very informative and well presented.

Other areas of concern raised by participants included access of women to loans and the need for information about the role of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA). It was explained that Mapusaga O Aiga is the focal point for CEDAW and that MWA acts as the lead agency. CEDAW underpins the development of women within the Pacific.

Progress on the CEDAW report, which MWA was preparing, was discussed and MWA replied that the report is in the revision stage and shall be distributed to government departments and NGOs once it is complete.

Challenges of implementation

Mapusaga O Aiga faces many challenges with respect to the promotion of CEDAW. These challenges were discussed with participants in the workshops and also with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. They are listed below:

- ❖ *Specific legislation to protect the rights of women:* current laws in Samoa do not specifically concern the rights of women. For example, there is no legislation to deal with domestic violence. Discussions are underway to rectify these matters as all agreed that the laws must reflect changing times.

- ❖ *Cultural conflict:* traditional Samoan culture is still very strong in today's society and therefore women are still seen as responsible for the family. Although some women have begun to work alongside men, others (especially rural women) find it difficult to achieve equality. It is important to make rural women aware of their rights. Samoan traditions have heavily influenced women and it is difficult for them to challenge the "norm".
- ❖ *Financial constraints:* it is difficult to find financing for workshops and the production of IEC materials. Workshops need to be held in rural areas but it is impossible to cover the cost of travel and accommodation. Visits to outer islands must be lengthy in order to get messages across, however, lack of overnight accommodation makes this very difficult.
- ❖ *Media coverage:* a television segment on CEDAW was recently broadcast, but unfortunately this report was only in English. Efforts must be made to translate such segments into the Samoan language in order to reach a larger group of women. To date, no radio spots have been broadcast. The use of radio should be seriously considered, as the majority of Samoan people have radios.

FUTURE PLANS

Teuila Festival

Mapusaga O Aiga made itself known through the Teuila Festival. Held on the first week of September 1999, MOA used the opportunity to promote CEDAW by holding seminars, presentations and discussion groups throughout the week. This was a prime opportunity to promote CEDAW as this was a time when people from all over Samoa congregate in capital, Apia, to celebrate. Other plans included the creation of a mobile office which could be set up easily at special events and activities.

Future workshops

Future workshops should include both men and women. Plans are also underway to train village representatives to promote CEDAW in their own communities. These may be offered through church groups, youth programmes and women's committees (three of the most prevalent groups in Samoa's village societies).

Media coverage

Recently, the Ministry of Women's Affairs held its National Symposium on CEDAW. This week-long programme was extensively covered by both television and newspapers. In future, Mapusaga O Aiga, in collaboration with the Ministry, hopes to hold media briefings to inform journalists of the events which MOA and MWA plan to hold in order to promote CEDAW.

More IEC materials

In addition to pamphlets, Mapusaga O Aiga plans to design and manufacture other forms of promotional material such as bookmarks, posters (to be distributed as prizes) and bumper stickers. However, production of these additional materials depends greatly on the availability of funding.

School research

Students from several colleges (Samoa College, Robert Louis Stevenson School) and the National University of Samoa (Seventh Form Programme), have conducted interviews and research projects on Mapusaga O Aiga and its functions. MOA sees this as an ideal opportunity to promote CEDAW. Future plans include the promotion of women's rights through the Career Days of educational institutions. It is hoped that if young people learn about women's rights, their parents will as well.

CONCLUSION

The Promotion of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through NGO Networks in the Pacific has been a challenging project for Mapusaga O Aiga. Although it feels as though not much has been accomplished, Mapusaga members realize that as the first island in the Pacific region to ratify the Convention without reservation, the country has already achieved a great deal.

One hopes that in the near future, all the inhabitants of Samoa will become aware of CEDAW and support equal rights for women – something which they rightfully deserve.

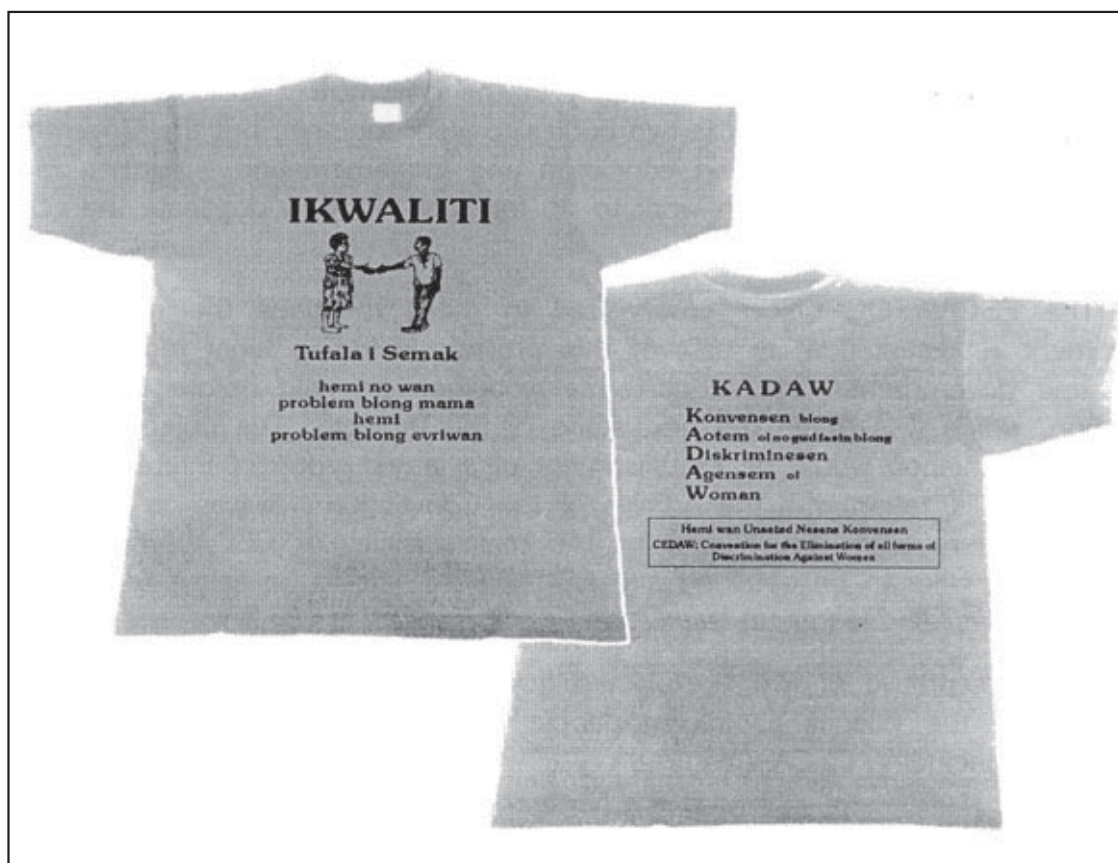
“To ensure that Women's Rights become Human Rights.”

VANUATU

Vanuatu National Council of Women (VNCW)
P.O. Box 975
Port Vila
Vanuatu



Vanuatu National Council of Women was established in 1980 and its membership is organized into 13 Island Councils of Women and 77 Area Councils of Women. VNCW's goals are to unite women to work together to achieve the objectives of development; to promote unity, peace and prosperity amongst all women and enable them to share their ideas, knowledge, skills and other resources to benefit all communities in Vanuatu and to build a strong network amongst all groups of women and relevant government sectors.



RETURN FROM NADI

At the Subregional Consultation of National Mechanisms towards Women's Rights in the Pacific held in July 1998, Vanuatu was represented by delegates from the ESCAP/Pacific Operation Centre (ESCAP/POC), the Vanuatu Women's Centre, the Vanuatu National Council of Women (VNCW), and the Government. Following this meeting, an invitation was sent to both government and non-government organizations, and on 12 August 1998, four government representatives, seven NGO representatives and ESCAP/POC representative met to plan how the project would be implemented in Vanuatu.

Confusion arose early in the meeting about the role the Government would play in what was to be an NGO-led project. It was explained that while the project was directed at NGOs in each of the participating Pacific countries, implementation of CEDAW was a government function and both NGOs and the Government work in areas covered by CEDAW (for example health, legal rights, and education).

Government and NGO partnership

Upon meeting several times, it was decided that government representatives should form part of the NGO CEDAW committee. The desire was also expressed that NGO representatives would form part of the government CEDAW committee. This would not only encourage the two bodies to work together, but the Government had better resources for ongoing education and implementation. Further, it was agreed that there was too much work to do for each body to duplicate the other's efforts.

The ESCAP/POC officer emphasized in these meetings the need for full government representation as part of this project, including legal representatives, chiefs and government. He suggested a workshop be held before the National Workshop, which was to be the next stage of the Project. The objectives of this preliminary workshop would be establishment of a larger group of interested parties and their familiarization with the Articles of the Convention. It was realized that a CEDAW brochure exists which explains the main Articles of CEDAW in simplified form. Copies were to be obtained and ESCAP/POC was to be asked to arrange a Bislama (Vanuatu lingua-franca) translation.

A representative of RRRT explained how her organization held legal literacy workshops in the villages to inform people about a number of United Nations Conventions, including CEDAW.

A working committee was formed from those in attendance in order to organize the National Workshop. As VNCW was the national project focal point, it was agreed that VNCW's president would chair the group and its director would oversee the secretarial functions. A planning subcommittee was to meet as often as required to draw up a plan of action. It was agreed that, once again, a wide variety of groups would be urged to attend the next meeting and that it take the form of a workshop which would provide people with a better understanding of the implications of the CEDAW Convention.

Planning subcommittee

At their first meeting, the planning subcommittee reviewed the budget for the National Workshop. Due to the high cost of internal travel, participants discussed how to encourage rural representation. It was decided to apply for extra funds so that the six VNCW Rural Women's Officers could attend the workshop. Also, a resource kit was to be made up and dispatched to rural workers so they could encourage village women to discuss the CEDAW Articles. The kit was to be made up of poster size sheets of paper. One sheet would be created for each of the 16 main articles. The kit would also contain paper and writing materials.

During discussions about the workshop programme, it was realized that fostering networks and creating IEC materials required quite different skills. Both objectives could be reached more effectively if workshop participants were divided into two groups after the first day of the workshop. At the end of the workshop, the two groups would be brought together again so they could share their ideas. A five-day programme was to be held and it was agreed to invite each organization to send two delegates: one to participate in a networking group and one to participate in an IEC group.

Working group meeting and seminar

Another meeting was held on 6 November 1998, but, like previous meetings, attendance was low, with many attending for the first time. The Director of Health attended for a short period and committed his office to attending all future meetings. The work of the planning subcommittee, including the new budget, was ratified by the meeting.

A Bislama version of the brochure summarizing CEDAW had been prepared by the ESCAP/POC office. Copies were circulated to all in attendance for use in the resource kit. The resource kit was demonstrated, and received general approval.

Discussion then moved on to developing a simpler Bislama title for the Convention. After much discussion, the phrase *Tabu blong Rafem Ol Woman* was agreed upon as a short title. A representative from the Attorney General's office presented an explanation of human rights and an overview of the CEDAW articles. He handed out an article on the status of New Zealand women and a copied letter from Mahatma Gandhi to the Director General of UNESCO, in which Gandhi stated that "the very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world". This presentation pointed out that CEDAW provides the basis for realizing equality between men and women through insuring equal access and equal opportunities in political and public life, as well as the modification of social and cultural patterns in order to eliminate prejudice, customs, and other practices, which perpetuate the subjugation of women. The Attorney General's representative advised that those States that are parties to the Convention are obligated to take concrete steps to eliminate discrimination against women; to modify or abolish existing laws, customs and practices that discriminate and to do all they can to ensure the full development and advancement of women so that they can exercise and enjoy

human rights and fundamental freedoms equally with men. He also noted that CEDAW was unique in that it did not confine itself to the conduct of the State, but included an obligation to take measures against any person, organization or enterprise that discriminates.

States parties responsibility

The Convention also allows for the introduction of affirmative action or positive discrimination until the objective of equality has been achieved, a concept that is not well understood in Vanuatu. The Convention recognizes the influence of culture and tradition in restricting women's enjoyment of rights and provides that states are to take appropriate measures to eliminate sex role stereotyping and practices that stem from a concept of the inferiority or superiority of one sex over the other.

The document provided by Attorney General's representative advised that Vanuatu already has existing legal provisions that capture some of the principles and objectives outlined in CEDAW. In the Employment Act, (CAP 160), Part VIII of the Act, sections 36 to 37, prohibits the employment of women at night, provides for maternity leave and restricts dismissal of women employees. Also, under the Public Service Staff Manual Chapter 11.11, there is provision for maternity leave, however, Vanuatu has not yet reached the stage where it is implementing the provisions of CEDAW. The real implementation of CEDAW has yet to come and although the Government has shown its obligation and support for CEDAW, it has not followed up on its primary initiative. The Attorney General's representative suggested that revision of the Employment, Family and Welfare laws be undertaken to incorporate CEDAW; along with employment Codes of Conduct; and that education and awareness campaigns be conducted in the public service and the private sector.

One of the government representatives commented that United Nations' Conventions were drawn up in other parts of the world, and did not necessarily have relevance for countries like Vanuatu because of *kastom* (custom). A great deal of discussion followed this comment which made it apparent to all that a wide consultative process would be required before CEDAW would find acceptance. The conflict between *Kastom* and international conventions would be one that would arise again and again.

Build up to the workshop

After this meeting, the planning subcommittee met regularly to prepare the workshop. They negotiated the extra funding required to bring province-based women to the workshop and to supply them with the resource packs they needed to conduct village based workshops prior to coming to the CEDAW workshop. The planning subcommittee also identified facilitators for both networking and design, and met with them on three occasions to discuss, and arrive at, consensus on the breadth of their separate tasks. The planning subcommittee also secured the venue for the workshop, sent out invitations, purchased resources and finalized the programme.

An opportunity was taken to make a small CEDAW presentation to a group of primary health care workers who were meeting in Port Vila. The group was invited to try out the resource kit and use any free time they had during the two days of their workshop to design posters or brochures about CEDAW. The exercise unfortunately did not result in useful designs; however feedback indicated that some had benefited from having new knowledge about CEDAW.

Articles

Articles 1 to 16 were identified as the focus of the workshop as these were the ones that affected daily life. The Articles which related to the working of the CEDAW Committee and other matters were not considered part of the exercise, except for information purposes.

NATIONAL WORKSHOP

Report of the CEDAW workshop, 7-11 December 1998

Summary

A five-day programme had been planned that devoted all of the first day to educating participants about the CEDAW document and arriving at a common understanding of its relevance for development in Vanuatu. For the next two-and-a-half days, participants worked in groups, half developing networking concepts and half designing Information, Education and Communications (IEC) materials. On the afternoon of the fourth day, the two groups made presentations to the whole audience. The morning of the fifth day took the form of a summing up, with final comments from participants and plans for further action. Later that day, a performance by Wan Smol Bag Theatre preceded the closing ceremony, which was presided over by the Prime Minister.

Sixty-one organizations, both Non-Government Organizations and Government Organizations, were invited to send two representatives; one to network and one to design. Thirty-eight people were in attendance over the course of the week. Of these, 28 representatives were from NGOs, six representatives from GOs, one representative came from the Diplomatic Corps, one representative from the University of the South Pacific, one non-aligned representative, and one observer from the Pacific Community.

Day 1

The Ombudsman, officiated at the opening. In her address, she spoke strongly about the need for women to consider what they want from society, emphasizing that change must start with the women themselves. She pointed out that it is not in men's best interest to change society, as society works in their favour. To put CEDAW into practice will require a change of thinking. The Ombudsman also stated, based on the work of her office, that people are frightened to demand their rights because they fear being victimized. With no prosecution for breeches of rights, there are no legal precedents. In closing, she urged the group to be united on their precise aims in order to move forward, and she wished them every success for the week's work ahead.

Following the opening speech, the specific project that had led up to the workshop was explained. It was explained that Vanuatu is one of four Pacific countries involved in a UNDP/ESCAP funded activity to promote the CEDAW Convention (both to governments and to the grass roots). VNCW is this country's coordinating NGO, and reported to a regional meeting held in Fiji in April 1999. As well as developing networks to promote CEDAW, this workshop designed professionally-made IEC materials for circulation during the next stage of the project.

The President of VNCW then gave an overview of Vanuatu's involvement with CEDAW to date. She explained that after a good deal of lobbying by women, the Convention was signed in 1995, without dissent, debate or reservations. However, little had been done to implement the Convention and the first report, due one year after signing the Convention, had not been submitted.

A law lecturer from USP discussed the document in terms of everyday life. She said the issues must be debated, and society, the community, the village and the home is the appropriate place to do so. The law professor emphasized that the Articles are non-legal societal issues which require grass-roots support in order to bring about political change.

A question and answer session was facilitated by the representative from ESCAP/POC. He explained how the Convention relates to *kastom* and identified this as a major issue to be considered in promoting CEDAW at the village level. Women used to delivering services to villages reinforced the need to promote the Convention to both men and women, as women's issues are too often brushed aside as 'problem blong Mama'.

Day 2

The second day commenced with a refresher overview of CEDAW by a representative from the Foundation for Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP), who was representing the other networking facilitators from UNICEF and Pacific Island Non-Government Organizations (PIANGO). FSP's representative commenced by reinforcing a major point from the day before that change must come from the people. He then proceeded to give a presentation on networking. This reminded the group that for the project's purposes, the two major reasons for strengthening networks were to facilitate the distribution of IEC materials and to move towards a country report to the United Nations by the year 2000. He defined a CEDAW network as 'a system of interconnected peoples, organizations or institutions working together to support and contribute to the purpose and goal of CEDAW'. He then provided handouts on NGO networking and suggested the following steps in carrying out the project:

1. identifying focal points (institutions which would play a leading role in CEDAW).
2. defining of the roles each organization would play in the network.
3. identifying and defining of the resources each network member could provide.

4. identifying of a focal point which would monitor the success of the project.
5. identifying of specific resources needed for the project: people; funds; time.
6. enlisting the commitment of contributors to the network.
7. strengthening the focal point through building its management and monitoring capacity.

In closing, FSP's representative emphasized the importance of ensuring that resources from all parties in the network are coordinated and used to reach the goals of CEDAW.

Next, a representative from the Ministry of Health gave a presentation on design of IEC materials. She outlined the range of possible teaching aids (visuals, text, audio, audiovisual, games and other activities). Good communication, she advised, involves using several different teaching aids so that people's attention and interest are held. The Health Ministry's representative then discussed choosing the best method and identifying the purpose of the message. She concluded by providing ideas for making visual aids and illustrated these with examples of badly and well-designed posters and leaflets.

The co-facilitator from the Family Health Association followed on with examples of picture books, flip-charts and comic strips that her organization had used to good effect. All of these items were passed around the group. She reinforced the need to keep messages simple by addressing single issues rather than trying to address everything. She advised using language that is appropriate to the community, and pictures that reinforce the written message so there is no conflict between the two.

The audience then divided into two workshop groups; one for networking and one for design. Each discussed their task and brain stormed ideas before breaking into smaller working groups.

The networkers group first identified their existing networks in order to see what they could build on. Groups discussed international and national networking; community networking; lobbying for networking support; and information-sharing techniques.

The IEC group commenced by viewing the materials which the Rural Women's Officers had brought from their island workshops. These workshops had been held in the Torba, Penama and Tafea Provinces. The posters consisted primarily of written statements, with only a few pictures, although one group had designed a good range of brochures. IEC participants set about identifying themes within CEDAW and refining their focus. They arrived at women in decision making (Articles 5/7/10), women and the cash economy (Articles 11/13/14), and equal rights in family relations (Article 16). They then focused on designing posters, brochures and t-shirts because they felt that these were simple and effective ways to spread messages in rural areas.

Day 3

Participants went straight into their two groups at the start of the day, continuing to progress on their separate tasks so they could conclude them by the end of the day. The gathering was joined by a representative from SPC in Noumea, who attended as an observer.

The networkers group discussed how to develop each Article in relation to Vanuatu by collectively discussing drawbacks and identifying remedies. For example, in education, more boys attend secondary school than girls so this discrimination could be addressed by lobbying for scholarships for girls. There was a discussion about custom being man-made and discriminating against women, despite the fact that God had created men and women as equals. The group recognized that all over the world custom is changing, with some customs dying out. This was recognized as a positive process. Participants felt that some women did not realize that they were being discriminated against and often said things like “women should not be in politics”. There is a need to educate women so they can make informed choices and the group felt that change needs to take place within the family, e.g. by treating boys and girls equally; by joint decision-making at home. The group said they would like to see Article 2 written into domestic law, and recommended the Government to be proactive in promoting CEDAW through ministries and departments (Article 3). The Government should also enforce legislation such as the Employment Act which already includes CEDAW principles (Article 4). Other Articles were seen as already becoming accepted, although still requiring lobbying. However, group participants also felt that more public awareness was needed about Articles 12, 13 and 14. They foresaw a role for the University of the South Pacific Law School to direct research towards law reform regarding Article 15 and that VNCW should lobby to that end. Due to the conflict between custom and religion, they again identified awareness raising and education as needed in order to promote Article 16.

The IEC group had a burst of enthusiasm and quickly developed many ideas for posters and brochures. A representative from the Attorney General’s office who had been unable to attend on Day 1 due to other commitments, joined in towards the end of the day. He commenced by talking to the small groups but as everyone’s queries appeared to be the same, the whole workshop reassembled into one group. A general discussion ensued on the practice of CEDAW, its relationship to *Kastom* and existing laws that provide for CEDAW objectives, such as, the Employment Act.

While there are no physical barriers for women, they exist in rural areas through custom and culture. CEDAW has no binding authority in law but could be used to amend existing laws. Many organizations must work together for this to happen. The suggestion of establishing a quota for women came forward and the example of India was given. There it is mandatory that women be appointed to at least one third of local government positions.

Day 4

The IEC sub-groups came back together as one group in order to move towards a combined and comprehensive campaign. They arranged quotations for posters, brochures and t-shirts and then had a general discussion on flip-charts, videos, calendars and comic books. At this point they broke up again into even smaller groups of two or three in order to speed up the creation of draft materials. They clearly trusted each others' understanding of the issues and ability to develop materials that would be suitable for the grassroots and/or law enforcement.

A networker suggested to a designer that a training manual would be useful for all. The idea was quickly taken up. The networkers group had produced typed notes of all their discussions in order to map their thought processes. Discussions moved on to law reform and legal processes, affirmative action campaigns and other progressive strategies. The two groups were very keen to know what each other had developed and which issues each had identified.

Working up to final presentations produced considerable animation and laughter – the result of the camaraderie that had developed among participants during what had been fairly intensive work.

After lunch, the networking group presented first. They had summarized their main points on charts which two group members presented. They had identified the objectives of networking as: the sharing of resources and information and the development of a coordinated approach with other organizations in strengthening and providing support that would raise awareness and lobby for change. They had also identified barriers to achieving good networking such as gender (men think CEDAW is women's business); lack of support from women at the grass roots; the high turnover of MPs and political instability; the lack of women MPs; and insufficient funds. Key ingredients for success included: talking about CEDAW in the context of human rights; being well informed about the subject; and being accessible and responsive. Strategies for formal and informal sharing of information were identified along with a list of organizations to lobby, such as, the media, the police, and the attorney general's office.

Lastly, the networking group produced a list of desired IEC materials, which in addition to those being developed by the designers, included legal documents and conventions, banners, stickers and petitions. They also made the following specific recommendations: 1) Develop a CEDAW training manual and/or resource package with IEC materials inside for NGOs. Incorporate this into existing (NGO) training modules; 2) VNCW should coordinate NGO activities for CEDAW; 3) Organize task group(s) to advocate for legal reform on laws affecting women, for example, the Employment and Health Acts on issues around maternity; the Matrimonial Act for improving maintenance payments; and the use of the University of the South Pacific to help with the above.

Active discussion was instigated by the IEC group, especially on how to develop channels for the incorporation of CEDAW into their existing work and training, also how to go about effective lobbying. It was agreed that the Networking groups' results were a starting point rather than a complete process and that each organization could further identify the best means by which to utilize the blueprint which had been provided.

Next the IEC group presented drafts of 11 posters, four brochures, three t-shirts and one flip-chart. These were passed around. They stated that a few members of the group would be continuing to work on a calendar for the year 2000. Examples of the poster messages were: *Givem Moa Janis long Ol Gel blong kasem Edukesen* (give girls more chances to get an education), which is to be accompanied by a diagram of a school girl imagining herself as a doctor; *Raet blong Jusum Patna Hemi Stampa Raet* (choosing your partner is a basic right), accompanied by a picture of a happy couple; and *Police imas Enforcem Loa blong Protektem Ol Woman* (police must enforce the law so as to protect women), with a cartoon depicting a scene where a policeman is intervening in a domestic violence incident. Brochures and t-shirts gave similar messages. It was also recommended that each item carry a message about CEDAW in small print. Approaching Wan Smol Bag Theatre to produce a video was discussed and it was noted that a CEDAW jingle had already been agreed on for use in a women's radio programme that VNCW would be starting after Christmas. The compilation of a training manual was left to VNCW, with the suggestion that participants review their existing training manuals for components relevant to CEDAW that could be used in one collective, all-purpose manual.

The networking group was very pleased with the efforts presented by the designers and felt the simple statements were effective. The idea of a millennium calendar was well supported. Each group was complimentary of the others' work, and showed their appreciation with a round of applause.

Day 5

ESCAP/POC's representative convened the summing-up session on the last morning by suggesting that through collectively identifying objectives during the course of the week, participants now have a commitment to educate people about CEDAW and persuade them to adopt its principles in their own lives. He went on to speak about a one-page handout that was circulated, advising that there still was a long way to go towards achieving medium-term and longer-term objectives. He advised participants that the countries representing the Pacific at the July CEDAW meeting in 1998 at Nadi, Fiji, had adopted the end of the year 2000 as the target for two achievements. These were ratification of CEDAW by the remaining Pacific Island countries, and submission of the first required reports to the United Nations from those countries that had already signed CEDAW. A calendar in table form had been drafted. This commenced with the minutes of the Nadi workshop being distributed to participants by January 1999, and leading through 12 steps to an official government and non-government CEDAW report that was due for submission by December 2000.

It was agreed to adopt the three recommendations made by the networking groups and to incorporate them into the Plan of Action. It was agreed that the future NGO CEDAW Task Force would have at its core those organizations that had attended this workshop. VNCW's Rural Women's Officers were requested to pre-test materials and provide networking ideas and feedback results to the Task Force. The Task Force would then further develop and refine the Plan of Action.

It was agreed that a copy of the attendance list would be made available to all participants. The Task Force was charged with overseeing the preparation of the NGO CEDAW report to be submitted to the CEDAW Committee in 2000.

Groups were requested to bring their work plan for the next calendar year (in particular for the first three months), to a meeting at the end of January 1999 so that IEC materials could be circulated by VNCW prior to each event.

Lastly, it was advised that the next step for VNCW was to have the IEC designs printed professionally for wide distribution and that project funds were available to pay for this. Also, it was noted that other funds might become available in future to continue the provision of IEC materials for the longer term. VNCW would coordinate the distribution of these materials, emphasizing the need to spread them as widely as possible, and above all to villages.

After the lunch break, the meeting resumed with a performance of the play "Arnold" by Wan Smol Bag Theatre. The play touched on many CEDAW issues, including the hard life of village woman, cost factors in girls accessing education, and therefore good jobs, reproductive health and family communication problems. The play was thoroughly enjoyed by the whole group and was a perfect concluding demonstration of how effective drama can serve as a means of "Informing, Educating and Communicating" to grass roots.

The Prime Minister, the Honourable Donald Kalpokas, MP, then formally closed the workshop. In his speech, he advised that:

It is the aspiration of the Government that the principals on which CEDAW is based will become the basis for all programmes focusing on women's rights and development here in Vanuatu. I hope that this workshop will serve as a springboard to developing policies that promote the political, economic, cultural, and educational advancement of women in Vanuatu.

The project schedule decided during the workshop

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event/Description</i>
15. 1. 1999	Draft minutes of the workshop distributed to participants and others.
26-30. 1. 1999	The NGO-CEDAW Task Force resumes monthly meetings. Focus is on identifying and affirming consensus on coordination/cooperation details.
31. 3. 1999	End of Phase 1. VNCW continues throughout the following year to identify specific activities, define them, secure resources for them, and then implement them.
15. 5. 1999	VNCW Anniversary. NGO-CEDAW Task Force presents its progress and plans to VNCW. Commitment is needed at this point to focus efforts on encouraging and assisting the creation, and then the formation, of a National Committee on CEDAW that is acceptable to all stakeholders.
31. 8. 1999	CoM reviews nominations (from internal or external sources) for members of the National Committee on CEDAW, finalizes the National Committee's Terms of Reference, appoints and gazettes members of the Committee.
31. 10. 1999	After two month's work, the National Committee's detailed work plan is finalized; subcommittees are appointed and given terms of references. The subcommittees have two months (plus the Christmas/New Year fortnight) to develop their own work plans.
15. 1. 2000	Subcommittees of the National Committee begin work collecting information on various aspects of CEDAW in Vanuatu, and drafting reports on those aspects.
15. 4. 2000	Subcommittee work is to be finished. The National Committee will spend a month compiling the subcommittees' work into a full draft report.
15. 5. 2000	VNCW Anniversary. The draft report is submitted by the National Committee to public and interested parties for comments. Public meetings are held over the next three months to discuss, consider, and suggest refinements, etc.
15. 8. 2000	The public comment period ends; The National Committee compiles comments into the final draft of first report.
30. 9. 2000	The final draft of first report on CEDAW is presented to CoM for consideration and approval.
31. 12. 2000 Target Date	Vanuatu's first report on the legislative, judicial, and administrative or other measures (eg., education, health, <i>Kastom</i>) which have been adopted to implement CEDAW, is prepared for the United Nations, including progress towards the provisions.

CoM = Council of Ministers.

The workshop evaluation:

Twenty-four evaluation forms were handed out at the start of day five and 17 were returned. It was emphasized that responding was voluntary and anonymous. Participants who arrived later in the day and had missed the briefing, were not given the form. None of the organizers completed the survey.

All criticisms expressed in the evaluation forms were noted to be addressed in the future. Some of the comments in relation to the running of the workshop are at opposite poles: some thought a week too long and others thought this too short. Some felt the objectives were not clear (even though they were stated on the invitation) and others felt they had achieved their objectives. Perhaps this wide variation can be explained by the different backgrounds of participants. Some participants were in management positions of NGOs and for others, this was their first experience of a national workshop. Some participants were ex-patriots who had previous experience in working with CEDAW in other countries, whereas other participants had no prior understanding of CEDAW at all. Those with little or no previous experience of CEDAW, or large workshops, seem to have enjoyed it the most.

Lack of support by GOs has plagued the project since the first meeting in the middle of the year. In the current reform environment, there have been an increasing number of committees established and an increasing number of meetings held. It has been common for the VNCW office to be advised of up to five meetings in any one day, often at short notice. VNCW was later criticized for non-attendance at meetings that took place during the course of the workshop week. It behoves the Government to not just tell GOs to network with NGOs, but to actually make it possible for them to do so by addressing this issue of multiple meetings.

A general lack of men in attendance was also noticed and remarked on. This may be part of the wider issues surrounding the 'problem blong Mama' (this is woman's problem) attitude. Of course, the question must be posed that had the room been half-full of men, would the women have spoken up so readily? Would the IEC designs have focused on the same issues? Would the results still reach grass-roots women?

The lack of attendance by other women leaders was a disappointment to VNCW also; however, division of time is just as much an issue for them too. Also, one must not overlook that NGOs usually suffer from under-staffing, given the demands placed on them, and that the first accountability of an NGO is to donors. Sometimes difficult choices have to be made between programme delivery and supporting sister organizations.

Suffice it to say that at the end of the week, all participants were more aware of CEDAW and generally better informed. They arrived strangers and departed not

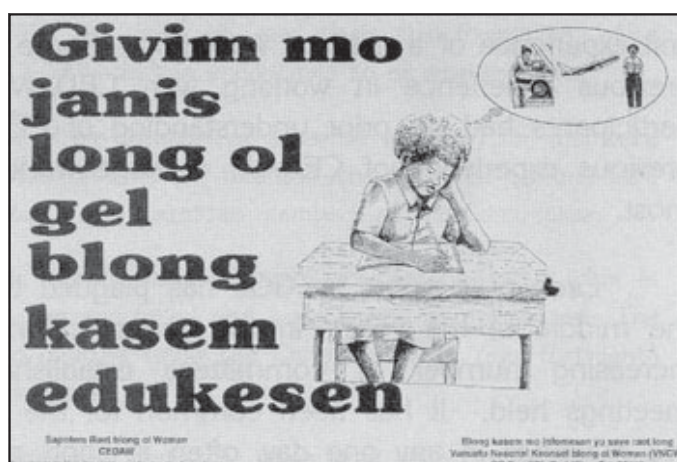
just colleagues, but friends. Some may even not have realized that they had actually been networking while they were there. Now, the responsibility of everyone is to continue the network started at the workshop and to introduce CEDAW to those with whom they interact.

Finally, VNCW has willingly accepted the role of coordinator in NGO-CEDAW activities, but it does not wish to be seen as being the 'owner' of 'matters CEDAW' in Vanuatu. As was identified by several speakers, unless there is commitment from the highest level to the household, the absorption of CEDAW in our daily lives will not come to pass.

EXTENDING THE NETWORKS AND DISSEMINATING IEC MATERIALS

Producing materials

The project focused strongly on the outcome of the design group. A meeting was held with the printer and a series of drawings commissioned. Nothing developed over the Christmas holiday period, but by late January, a range of draft materials were at a stage



suitable for presentation to the group. A comprehensive report on the workshop was circulated in draft form to all participants as well as other organizations that had an interest in CEDAW. Committee meetings in January and February were poorly attended, but minutes were circulated widely to keep stakeholders informed.

Debriefing

By way of debriefing, the achievements of the December National Workshop were discussed in terms of what had been achieved and what lessons had been learned. Survey results proved useful in identifying areas of improvement for future CEDAW meetings and workshops. Restating and reinforcing objectives can not be overemphasized, nor can lengthy discussion on the Convention itself and its relation to *kastom*.

Networking matrix

Further, the survey suggested that whilst people were clearer on what networking is, there was still some uncertainty on how to make use of networking to meet each person's ends, and especially to further education about CEDAW. It was agreed that a networking matrix would be developed that would allow one page for each of the first 16 Articles (those being the ones relevant to daily life). The 16 matrices would be circulated to both GOs and NGOs with an invitation for them to nominate a contact person in the areas appropriate to them and return the forms to VNCW. Once all forms were returned, the information would be compiled into one document and circulated widely. This document would then form the basis of the network, so that when any NGO or government office was planning a workshop or seminar in a relevant area, they could refer to the document for counterpart organizations and resources. It would become the responsibility of the Working Group to update the matrix regularly.

IEC samples

Samples of the draft posters and brochures that had been forwarded to ESCAP in Bangkok, were viewed by the group. They met with general approval, but a comment was made on the use of drawings rather than photographs of real people. It was suggested that drawings would not have as great an impact as photographs. As a result, the samples were taken to the Outdoor Market in Port Vila and pilot tested on women stall holders, most of whom come from villages. These reviewers agreed with ESCAP/POC. The drawings were not realistic and those who participated in the pilot test preferred to have photographs of real people illustrating the messages.

In order to acquire photographs, photographic businesses were contacted to see if they could provide file photographs for use on the posters. When that approach failed, the taking of specific photos was investigated, however, this too was not easy to arrange. Rather than delay production further, the drafts were reviewed and those that could be duplicated with an available photograph were produced. The rest of the drawings were put aside until a photographer was available to take similar pictures.

Three t-shirt designs were discussed with a manufacturer. It became obvious that two designs required more work than the third, so one design was produced immediately. The t-shirt message was 'lkwaliti' (equality) and a drawing was used to illustrate it.

Work plans

A written request had gone out prior to Christmas urging groups to advise the Working Group of their schedules for 1999, especially for the first quarter of the year. As there had been no replies by the time of the first committee meeting in January, those in attendance were invited to submit dates for workshops and

seminars. At a subsequent meeting, a one-page calendar from March 1999 to March 2000 was approved for circulation with the minutes, and for distribution at the International Women's Day celebration.

Regarding the Plan of Action, as identified at the end of the workshop, it was agreed that the tasks of the larger plan needed to be broken down into subcommittee responsibilities and distributed among the larger group. The immediate need to prepare for National Women's Day on 15 May was highlighted.

Training manual

Attempts were made to find training manuals which had already created by groups promoting CEDAW, but nothing was initially found. However, a training book produced by SPC called "Working with Women: Handbook No. 2"

was identified as a potential model for Vanuatu's manual. It was suggested to develop exercises in the 16 main areas of CEDAW, plus an opening and closing module, so that the manual could be broken down into the specific areas user organizations would require. This idea will be developed further by VNCW, with assistance from SPC. Separate funding will likely be required for this, but it was felt that donors would be receptive. Also, the model might be generalizable to other Pacific island countries.



The notion of using radio soap opera as a training tool is still under consideration. In the interim, attempts to view existing training manuals will continue.

The launching of project IEC materials – International Women's Day

A fund-raising lunch was organized by VNCW to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March. As this was the perfect vehicle to preview the materials, and ideally get some media exposure, there was a pressing need to have everything ready in time (five posters, two brochures and the t-shirt).

One hundred and ten women and men attended the lunch. Representatives from NGOs who were unable to attend the lunch, were invited to come later to view the materials and take some away. The Prime Minister and the Director General of his office attended the whole session. During the lunch, the work plan calendar was circulated, with the hope of gathering information about upcoming events where project materials could be distributed.

VANGO annual general meeting

The Vanuatu Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (VANGO) held its Annual General Meeting in Port Vila in mid-March. The opportunity was taken to display IEC materials and make quantities available to the 11 NGOs in attendance.

VNCW network

In mid-March, VNCW's three Rural Women's Officers, along with the 13 Island Council Presidents, were brought to Port Vila for a workshop. All 16 were given supplies to take back to their islands for use in CEDAW workshops and as resource materials in other related areas, such as workshops on micro-credit training. The 13 Island Councils are made up of 127 Area Councils, which in turn are made up of approximately 700 village women's groups.

While in Port Vila, the group was addressed by UNDP's Good Governance Project team and CEDAW materials were provided to them. This team was made up of the Ombudsman, the President of the Council of Chiefs and two Professors from USP.

District Administrators from two provinces (Malampa and Tafea) visited the VNCW office in March. A presentation about CEDAW was made to them and they were each given full sets of materials to take back to their provincial offices. A representative of the Minister for Internal Affairs was also in attendance for this seminar.

At the NGO level, Vanuatu Credit Union League (VCUL) was supplied with enough material for its 60 village-based branches. Supplies were also made available to: the Vanuatu Women's Centre and its branch, the SANMA Counselling Centre (Crisis Centres), which is based on the island of Espiritu Santo; Save the Children Fund Australia (SCFA) which dispatched Project materials to its health project in Middle Bush, Santo and a UNICEF nutrition project on Malekula Island. Forty of each were also given to the Society for Disabled People for distribution by their four area workers whose work takes them to villages on outer islands. One hundred and seventy copies were provided to SCFA for distribution to aid posts as part of a health awareness promotion. Wan Smol Bag Theatre was given a supply for their youth clinic in Port Vila, and for their planned tour of 30 villages on two islands. The Rural Skills Training Programme (RSTP) received six copies for centres on Epi, Paama and Santo, and the Vocational Rural Development Training Centre Association (VRDTCA) received 40 sets for circulation to their village based-centres.

At the government level, samples were provided to the main departments working in CEDAW areas. These were the departments of Women's Affairs, Education, Agriculture, Cooperatives and Ni-Vanuatu Business Opportunities. All of these departments have community workers on islands. Also, the Primary Health Care (PHC) Coordinator at the Health Department (who was an IEC facilitator), was given adequate supplies for distribution to her six PHC educators based at the six provincial headquarters. Materials were provided to VANWODS, the Vanuatu Women's Development Scheme (micro-credit). Two hundred women who are involved in the scheme are based in villages on the outskirts of Port Vila. The Cultural Centre Women's Coordinator received a small supply for visits to four villages in North Efate. Their Young People's Project (YPP) was also supplied. The 30 main high schools, which are spread across 10 islands, were each sent a full set of materials, plus a summary of the CEDAW Articles in Bislama.

The international volunteer network was also utilized. Peace Corps (USA) received 30 sets of everything for distribution to its volunteers who are based in 25 villages on 20 islands. JOCV (Japan), whose volunteers are also village based, received 16 sets for use on 12 islands. A CUSO (Canada) volunteer, who was visiting several islands identifying projects, was supplied with 20 of everything. Her supplies will be replenished regularly as required. Three VSA (New Zealand) volunteers are based in different villages on two islands and they were supplied as well.

VNCW communication tools

The CEDAW radio jingles, produced by Wan Smol Bag Theatre were aired on *Oi Woman Tedei*, the VNCW weekly half-hour national radio programme. This programme is targeted at village women. Two jingles will be played during every programme. Should other funding become available, the jingles could stand on their own as radio spots.

Nius Blong Oi Woman, the VNCW national newsletter, which has a circulation of 3000 around the country, will feature the completed IEC designs in the May 1999 edition and will use reduced images of the posters to fill spaces in future editions. Readers will be invited to contact the office if they would like posters and brochures for their own villages.

Distribution budget

The need for a second workshop to distribute the materials was not deemed necessary. A distribution network had been easily identified. It became more important to find out what suitable events were coming up and to make sure that organizers knew the materials were available. That being the case consent to vary the use of the distribution budget was sought.

Based on recommendations of the working group, the budget was used for the following purposes: to produce more materials; to employ a person for one week; to telephone a targeted group of organizations and government offices; to find out what seminars and workshops they planned for the year; to make 3,000

photocopies of an insert which was added to an issue of *Nius Blong Ol Woman*; and to purchase a supply of postage stamps for future use in distributing extra materials. Due to the high cost of travel, the budget was not deemed enough to allow for visits to the provinces to hold workshops, or to pay province-based people to visit more than a few villages.

LESSONS LEARNED

Given that people have different levels of understanding of CEDAW, future workshops could be divided into two stages, each of two or three days duration. The first stage would be devoted entirely to explaining CEDAW, with the first day's session aimed at absolute beginners. On the second day, these would be joined by those with a moderate knowledge of CEDAW. On the third day those who only needed a brief refresher about CEDAW would join the first two groups. Once this introductory phase had been completed, a second session would focus only on the objectives of the workshop.

Getting people with no design experience to design effective IEC materials is not an easy task. Basic principles of effective design had to be understood before the drafting of materials could be attempted. Obviously it was not possible to train VNCW field staff to much extent before they went out to villages to conduct IEC-development workshops. The concept of asking grass-roots women to design materials is laudable, but in practice not very successful. The most important achievement of the national workshop was the attendance of women from distant islands (for which extra budget had to be obtained). This approach enabled people based in rural areas, who understood local conditions, to collaborate with people with design expertise. Thus the ideas of the former could be translated into an effective poster or t-shirt.

Vanuatu's Comprehensive Reform Programme (CRP) has resulted in a myriad of committees being established in every arena. Towards the end of 1998, it was common in many agencies to be invited to three or more meetings per day. In both GO and NGO circles, staff were complaining of spending so much time attending meetings that they did not have time to write reports, or complete any other work. This problem impacted the CEDAW workshop because many people were unable to attend a week-long session, and of those who did, many missed some sessions in order to attend other meetings.

Women and men working in the CEDAW programme areas invariably rely on donor funding to continue to operate. As a result, they are busy meeting donor objectives and are not always able to support each other's seminars and workshops.

Government officers are primarily men. There were several comments made during the workshop and through later feedback, about the lack of men in attendance. There are the attitudes that *kastom* takes precedence over international conventions, and that women's welfare is a women's problem. Increased participation of men is only likely to occur if government is pressured and the Government employees can attend as part of their regular work.

The difficulty in getting good attendance at working group meetings hindered progress. A small planning core eventually did all the work, but they had work of their own to attend to as well. More advance notice might have secured a larger attendance. Regardless, despite the low numbers of participants, there was no lack of quality of participants. Those in attendance were very dedicated to the issues and to their tasks and the outcome of the project will reflect this.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The working group is aware of the special meeting on women being held at the United Nations in 2000. VNCW has contributed to the report to the United Nations which is being compiled by the Department of Women's Affairs.

The Asia Pacific Women Lawyers in Development (APWLD) group met in Port Vila in June 1999. The topic of their conference was CEDAW and the Law. VNCW co-organized the conference and reported back to the working group.

Wan Smol Bag Theatre applied to the new AusAID Human Rights fund for support to produce a CEDAW soap opera for use on Radio Vanuatu, in particular on *Oi Woman Tedei* – VNCWs radio programme. VNCW has submitted a letter of support for their application, rather than applying separately for funding. Wan Smol Bag intends to produce the soap opera in both Bislama and English so that it can be used more widely in the Pacific.

All laws in Vanuatu are to be reviewed within the next five years. Whilst it could not be expected that they will all reflect CEDAW edicts, women will be consulted regarding how laws are developed and this will reinforce alignment with CEDAW.

Van WIP has on its programme the review of Vanuatu laws to bring them into line with CEDAW.

Reform of Parliament and the electoral system (part of a recently- announced Phase II of CRP) has increased interest in establishing a Human Rights Commission. All of these developments will support women, and for mainstreaming CEDAW.

Chapter Three

WAY TOWARD CEDAW RATIFICATION: CASES FROM OTHER PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

During the subregional meeting (see Chapter Four), Federated States of Micronesia and Solomon Islands made country presentation on the way towards CEDAW ratification. These countries have not ratified CEDAW to date.

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA: COUNTRY REPORT

From 10 to 14 May 1999, representatives from the country's four States came together in Kolonia, Pohnpei, for a workshop on CEDAW. This workshop was jointly sponsored by the National Women's Advisory Council and the FSM Women's Association Network (an NGO). The Pacific Regional Human Rights Resource Team (RRRT) provided technical assistance, in collaboration with the UNDP's Good Governance Programme.

The workshop was the first of its kind in the FSM. Although CEDAW had been examined and discussed at the State level, and during the third and fourth FSM Women's Conferences, this was the first time that participants from all the States came together and examined CEDAW and the National Convention/laws and States Conventions/laws. Technical assistance for the workshop was provided by the Pacific Regional Human Rights Resource Team (RRRT).

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants formulated a Plan of Action for the four states which was intended to increase public awareness of CEDAW. Following the workshop and return to their own states, participants agreed to carry out the following plans:

- ❖ Share their experiences and the Plan of Action with the public;
- ❖ Circulate a petition to be signed by as many women as possible;
- ❖ Form a task force on CEDAW that would include as many key personalities as possible;
- ❖ Translate the Convention; and
- ❖ Begin the public information campaigns: Radio programme, pamphlets, flyers and others.

The agreed-upon project time frame was to be about a year. The national Government had promised to assist the States in implementing their Plans of Action.

For the past several years, FSM has been reviewing CEDAW, and the National Executive Branch has twice submitted the Convention to the National Congress for ratification. During the 10th Congress, the Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs pushed for ratification of the Convention. It was passed by the Committee, but during the final session of the whole Committee of the 10th Congress, it was deferred. Members of Congress wanted more public awareness about the Convention, especially at the grassroots level, before taking action.

Perhaps it was a blessing that the 10th Congress did not ratify the Convention. As it came out during the workshop on CEDAW, the public, especially those at the grass roots needed to have a good understanding of CEDAW, its intention and how it would impact their daily lives. As mentioned earlier, participants of the recently-concluded workshop on CEDAW formulated plans and committed themselves to bringing greater awareness to the public about the pros and cons of CEDAW. It has been envisioned that within a year, and with greater effort by the States' Task Force, that the people of the Federation would be in a better position to either ask Congress for ratification or give up the lobbying process because there was no need for change. As former First Lady said during a social function for the Workshop on CEDAW, "It should be an initiative from all the women in FSM who think there is a need to change or improve the quality of life for ourselves and our future generations".

During the national workshop in May 1999 on CEDAW, the Pacific Regional Human Rights Resource Team (RRRT) provided assistance under the UNDP's Good Governance Programme. During the workshop participants closely examined CEDAW, National Conventions/laws, States' Conventions/laws and formulated four State Plans of Action to increase public awareness and accelerate the lobbying efforts to ratify CEDAW. As a result of this workshop, recommendations were made on: (1) sharing the Plan of Action at State level; (2) circulating a petition to as many women as possible; (3) forming a task force on CEDAW; (4) translating CEDAW; and (5) beginning public awareness campaigns through radio programmes, pamphlets, flyers, etc. The National Government has promised to assist the four States in implementing their Plans of Action.

SOLOMON ISLANDS: COUNTRY REPORT

Current situation

Like a number of Pacific island countries, the Solomon Islands is signatory to the principles of CEDAW, but has yet to ratify the Convention since it came into force in 1981. However, the country is fully committed to advancing the status of women. In its Organic Law, the Constitution of Solomon Islands protects the rights of all its citizens, regardless of gender, and ensures that there is no discrimination against women. This already sets the scene for commitment to and implementation of CEDAW.

It can be said with confidence that the implementation of CEDAW began even before ratification. A number of important issues which are directly related to articles of the Convention had been addressed and will continue to be addressed by the Government, churches and NGOs. For instance, the Family Support Centre is addressing the issue of domestic violence. Solomon Islands women already have a right to vote and to participate in the political processes of the country. The Labour Act covers women's employment entitlements.

Reflective also of the Government's commitment has been the establishment of the Women and Development Division (WDD), the establishment and financing of the National Council of Women (NCW), the establishment of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Sports and, most importantly, the passing by Cabinet of the first-ever Solomon Islands National Women's Policy in October of 1998.

In its Reform Programme, women's issues and concerns have also been integrated in the Government's Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS). This

views women as an important economic resource that can be mobilized towards the twin national goals of economic growth and equal access to resources. Regionally, the Solomon Islands is also committed to addressing the critical areas of concern in the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA). Similarly, the NGOs, including the churches, enhance women's development by playing a major complimentary role to government services.

One of the major barriers for women of the Solomon Islands has been the fact that they are not aware of their rights. Also services relating to women's rights are often not available and accessible. If not dealt with, these constraints may limit progress towards ratification. The ESCAP project on the promotion of CEDAW would be very timely in a country which is working towards ratification of CEDAW.

In working towards ratification and implementation of CEDAW, the Government, churches and NGOs all have important and interdependent roles to play. Also CEDAW must not be seen or be dealt with separately from other important national commitments such as implementation of the Solomon Islands National Women's Policy, the Pacific Plan of Action (PPA) or implementation of the National Women's Machinery Review recommendations. These commitments must be integrated through a Plan of Action to complement each other, as well as to save resources.

In preparation for ratifying CEDAW, the Government has begun to pursue the following priorities: identification and establishment of focal points within the Government and NGOs, institutional strengthening or capacity building of focal points, and creating and formalizing an effective network through which CEDAW can be implemented. Prior to ratification, there is need to review existing laws in the Solomon Islands to see which ones discriminate against women. Additionally, there is need for gender sensitizing in order to create a climate that is conducive to continuous dialogue between government and NGOs. Finally public support for CEDAW must be generated.

The role of the churches and NGOs

Churches

The role of the churches and NGOs in the movement towards ratification of CEDAW is crucial. While they must maintain dialogue with the Government as partners in women's development, their own networks must be strengthened to be fully prepared for CEDAW. The churches and NGOs in the Solomon Islands complement Government efforts by providing or augmenting community services, providing informal training and by enhancing women's development.

Today there are five main churches in the Solomon Islands, and a number of smaller ones. The five main churches form the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA), which coordinates their activities and provides representation to the Government and other authorities. SICA also operates the SICA Federation Women's Desk, which represents the women's groups (CWG's) of the five main churches. The CWGs are an integral part of the churches and are strongly supported by their respective denominations. The CWGs have also been strong supporters for a National Women's Policy and have urged the Government to assist the churches in women's development.

Although some of the articles of CEDAW could be seen as contrary to religious beliefs, the CWGs have proven to be, and will remain, an efficient and effective means of implementing women's development programmes in rural areas. The ESCAP project could make effective use of the network of CWGs because they are linked from the national level down to the villages. Also their programmes take a "holistic" approach by addressing not only the well-being of the individual, but also that of the family and the community. Subjects such as health, nutrition, home management, literacy, and early childhood education are now being integrated with evangelical programmes.

The strengths of the CWG network are as follows:

- ❖ a network that reaches rural communities
- ❖ familiarity with rural needs and ability to identify the training needs of the community
- ❖ the ability to train trainers at various levels
- ❖ a network of women's groups whose activities benefit the community as a whole
- ❖ a group of committed members, most of whom are volunteers
- ❖ collaboration with the established churches would provide a structure through which the ESCAP project could operate

NGOs

NGOs, like the churches, provide an important avenue for promoting CEDAW. While some NGOs such as the YWCA, the National Council of Women, and the Solomon Islands Information Network are specifically women's organizations, others have broader roles and functions.

The Development Services Exchange (DSE) is the umbrella body for NGOs working in the Solomon Islands. It coordinates the activities of its members to help and strengthen the NGO communities and to encourage people-centred development. Currently there are about 60 affiliated members.

The NCW is the umbrella body for women's organizations in the country. The Council has been charged with the responsibility of promoting mutual understanding, cooperation, consultation and networking among all focal points that are responsible for training, information projects and the overall development of women. NCW was recently created, following the recommendations of a review on the national women's machinery. It was decided that NCW should be used as the major focal point for coordination and implementation of CEDAW through NGO networks. However since it may take time before the Council is fully established, it was recommended that the Women and Development Division (WDD), which, in close consultation in DSE, serves as the focal point until NCW is ready to carry out its functions. It is important to note that the NGOs and the Government (through the WDD) have worked closely together in recent years in addressing women's issues through training sessions, workshops and meetings. Although informal, this relationship should be seen as a positive step towards effective coordination and networking for women's development within Solomon Islands. There is also a need for this relationship to be further strengthened in order to promote cooperation and discourage competition.

Constraints and recommendations

The delay in ratifying CEDAW has not been a result of ignorance about the Convention. Rather, it was felt that the following problems must first be addressed:

Staffing problem

The effective implementation of CEDAW depends on appropriate staff. Both NCW and WDD need adequate numbers of appropriately trained staff. As the Government arm responsible for women's development, WDD will also become the government focal point for CEDAW. Currently WDD is acutely short of staff both at the national and the provincial levels. Similarly, the NCW has yet to employ administrative staff to carry out functions at the national and provincial levels. Although it is encouraging to note that the Government in its Medium Term Development Strategy increased the staff of WDD, staff numbers are still not adequate. WDD staff also need training to increase their capacity to implement CEDAW.

Strengthening of focal points through establishing and formalizing the network

While it is not too difficult to identify focal points within the churches and the NGOs, there is still a need to strengthen these focal points through skills training and financial resources. Apart from WDD, there is a need to identify women's focal points in other government departments in order to carry out CEDAW. The Planning Divisions, which already exist in some of the Departments, would be good choices for focal points. In recognition of the importance of an efficient network among NGOs, churches and the Government, these networking relationships should be endorsed by the Government.

Resources

The lack of financial resources to carry out women's development activities continues to be the Solomon Islands' biggest obstacle. There is an urgent need for funding from international donors as they are the major source of financing for women's development in the country. On this note, it is also important for donors to consult with the Government and WDD to ensure that development programmes such as the promotion of CEDAW reflect national priorities. Continuous dialogue among donors, NGOs and the churches is also essential in promoting and implementing CEDAW.

Mainstreaming of CEDAW

Although gender is already integrated into the Government's Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) and gender training for planners will take place in September 1998, gender considerations are as yet not a formal part of the national planning process. However, government departments are playing an increasing role in addressing or integrating women's issues in development programmes. It is therefore necessary to consider CEDAW when undertaking sectoral planning to ensure the Convention has maximum impact at all levels of administration and government. This obviously will also impact assistance the Government might

provide to the churches and NGOs to enable them to undertake CEDAW activities. A Plan of Action which integrates the Solomon Islands National Women's Policy, the PPA and recommendations of the Review of the National Machinery should be a priority in the mainstreaming process.

Review of national laws

It is likely that some of the country's laws still discriminate against women, while others have been revised to fit articles of the Convention. In view of this, it is recommended that a legal expert be made available to look at the existing laws of Solomon Islands in order to identify which ones still discriminate against women. This will also ensure that planning activities are more specific and well targeted.

Awareness raising and advocacy on women's rights

Ratification of CEDAW requires acceptance and widespread support for it at all levels of society. Awareness raising about CEDAW and advocacy of women's rights must therefore be given priority. Training should be given to focal points so they can effectively carry out CEDAW activities. It is also important that CEDAW be translated into simple language so that it can be easily understood. This will help people see the usefulness of CEDAW in their own context and encourage them to develop a sense of ownership for it.

Collection of data

The lack of accurate and comprehensive data on the situation of women in the Solomon Islands continues to be a problem. It is therefore important that a survey be undertaken to collect accurate data to ensure that planning for implementation of CEDAW is more targeted and focused.

Partnerships

Implementation of activities to achieve ratification of CEDAW must be undertaken in partnership. It is important that there is constant dialogue between partners to maintain a healthy working relationship during the implementation of CEDAW-promoting activities. Training should be provided on how to initiate and maintain effective networking.

We would like to recommend that ESCAP, in close consultation with the SPC/PWRB, coordinate NGO networking on CEDAW throughout the Pacific. ESCAP already has a project which is using NGO networks in the Pacific to promote CEDAW.

Conclusion

In promoting CEDAW in the Solomon Islands, there are strengths and opportunities to build on and also weaknesses which must be overcome. Through careful planning, in preparation for ratification of the Convention, CEDAW can be implemented effectively. It is hoped that the principles of CEDAW will be translated into the local context so that people will identify with it and develop a sense of ownership for it. Once this stage has been reached, support for implementation of CEDAW will be guaranteed from the national to the community levels.

Chapter Four

SUBREGIONAL MEETING

The Subregional Meeting on Promotion of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) through NGO-networks in the Pacific was held on 18 and 19 May 1999 in Suva, Fiji, to share experience of the project implementation and discuss about the replicability of the project approach in other Pacific island countries. The meeting reaffirmed that NGO networks and collaboration are critical in bringing the articles of CEDAW into practice. This collaborative approach should further be used for reporting and monitoring mechanisms of CEDAW along with the IEC materials produced. The meeting also recognized that there is a need to understand the substantive issues of CEDAW prior to preparing promotional materials.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants at the subregional meeting passed the following recommendations at the end of the meeting. The recommendations, which is a result of the project implementation review and discussion of the future implications, concern (a) the substance of the materials to be produced for the promotion of CEDAW to reach target audience, (b) networking to bring synergy effect on the CEDAW promotion efforts at all levels, (c) working with civil society for the penetration and practice of CEDAW in daily life of all women and men, (d) media mainstreaming to take advantage of information technology and media communications for the promotion of CEDAW, and (e) financial implications of the above.

(a) Substance (materials)

1. To reach the target audience effectively and to empower them, involve them from the project designing.
2. Message should be simple to be understood clearly. Material selected can be practical (such as calendar and stickers).
3. In order to ensure the involvement of both men and women in combating the infringement of the CEDAW, the participation of men and women in production of IEC materials should be actively encouraged. Pre-testing of the materials for both men and women is essential.
4. The dissemination of information through serials and dramas, especially through television and radio, could be promoted as these are effective means for creating awareness, changing people's attitudes and behaviours. All forms of information dissemination should be considered in order to gain access. For instance, involving commercial script writers to deliver CEDAW implication should be explored.
5. An exchange of the handbooks, scripts, songs and other materials created during the project should be encouraged on a regional level. ESCAP and regional organizations such as the Pacific Community could be the coordinating body to facilitate this exchange.
6. Be sensitive about the use of vocabulary in CEDAW which might cause major conflict with culture and society of the target groups.
7. All materials should be translated into local languages. Accuracy of translation should be ensured by obtaining technical assistance in the country where available. In case of technical terms clarifications, seek the cooperation of regional agencies such as RRRT and SPC.
8. In some circumstances, IEC material needs to be targeted for the use of carefully specified audience due to the sensitivity of the CEDAW contents.

(b) Networking

1. Links between national level NGOs and grass-roots NGOs which were fostered in the implementation of this project should be maintained, strengthened and enhanced. A regional network should be further strengthened through ESCAP Women's Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (WINAP) Newsletter and other forms of newsletters in the region.
2. Since subregional networking is prevalent, such networking could be strengthened without necessarily conforming to a formal structure (i.e. by facilitating information exchange at various meetings). As for a formal structure, SPC/PWRB should strengthen the regional network as a focal point for the CEDAW promotion.
3. Utilize new information and communication technology which creates opportunities for dialogue while recognizing risks of marginalizing disadvantaged groups.
4. Network at all levels, national, subregional, regional, global for exchanging experience and provide support to one another.
5. Create synergies between research organizations and grass-roots NGOs so that insights gained at grass-roots level can influence research agenda and vice versa.
6. Donors should be approached for linking Internet connections over the region.
7. For the ratification of CEDAW in countries which have not ratified the Convention, seek regional cooperation of national NGOs in countries which have ratified the Convention (i.e. Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Vanuatu). This technical cooperation could be facilitated by regional and international agencies.
8. Donors should consider funding projects in line with other activities which have already taken place.
9. Work with those who are working with other conventions, such as CRC in particular, to link CEDAW.

(c) Working with civil society

1. While coordinating and cooperating with national focal points for women, linkages with other ministerial entities should be taken into consideration in order to build firm GO-NGO collaboration.
2. CEDAW-awareness training for line ministries should be provided and preferably built into training programmes.
3. Create/strengthen new partnership to develop coalitions and synergies among different group linked to specific CEDAW areas of concerns such as violence against women.
4. Donors should propose that any project proposals of governments and NGOs have gender aspects in their proposed activities.

5. In the context of maintaining social integrity and ongoing economic reform, link national women's development plan with National Development Plan.
6. Government should not depend on NGOs for the CEDAW promotion at grass roots. The National focal point for the advancement of women should take an active role in coordinating and strengthening NGOs capacity in this regard.
7. Traditional leaders such as village chiefs should be familiarized with CEDAW.
8. Organize an open forum between NGOs and government to discuss the promotion of CEDAW to share their views and to coordinate the action together for the promotion/ratification of CEDAW.
9. As there are many other NGO activities, lack of human resources in NGOs sometimes hinder project implementation. Volunteers are encouraged to provide additional support to project implementation. Donors should recognize this perpetuate problem faced by NGOs when providing funds without operational costs.

(d) Media mainstreaming

1. While cost-effective strategies such as disseminating information through schools and colleges could be undertaken, their audience is limited. In spite of the higher costs, mainstream media should also be utilized because these reach a much larger audience.
2. Establish/strengthen media monitoring groups to prevent negative portrayal of women in all forms of media.
3. Establish network with mainstream media, by inviting them for workshops and other activities. For this, effort to make CEDAW promotion programme commercially competitive would be necessary.
4. To increase public attention and interest, media coverage on CEDAW promotion activities should be promoted.
5. State-run broadcasting companies could be approached to provide free air time for CEDAW awareness raising, preferably during prime time. Private media companies, where available, should also be approached to provide a concessional rate for programming on social issues.
6. Promote gender sensitivity in media representation of women in media especially at the managerial level.

(e) Finance

1. For materials produced during the project implementation period which are proven to be popular, donor agencies should be approached for reproduction for greater multiplier effect. ESCAP should consider providing support for transition period while other funding source for material reproduction are being sought.

2. Where state run broadcasting companies as well as commercial television programmes are becoming expensive, donor agencies should be approached to sponsor some television programming.
3. Funding could be explored for activities which should not be undertaken during the project. These include the production of television spots, women's festivals, slide productions for cinema hall distribution and television dramas, etc.
4. The effectiveness and impact of the various forms of media used in the project should be assessed. Funding for modalities under which donors could directly support NGO projects should be explored.
5. Donor agencies should consider financing CEDAW promotional activities as part of awareness raising of CEDAW. Promotion should be given equal weight in terms of finance with other activities.
6. Considering the geographical nature of the Pacific island countries, it should be understood that the transport cost will be high in order to reach target groups.
7. Funds should be made available for countries which have not ratified the Convention for promotion of the ratification.
8. Donors should be aware the ongoing activities funded by other sources to consolidate funding the efforts. For example, IEC materials produced during this project could be incorporated into the CEDAW portion of the ongoing good governance project funded by UNDP.

(f) Other

Where cultural practices are supportive of women's human rights, these practices should be used as an integral part in promoting CEDAW articles.

Appendix 1:
**CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS
OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)
AND ITS OPTIONAL PROTOCOL**

The States Parties to the present Convention,

Noting that the Charter of the United Nations reaffirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of man and women,

Noting that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex,

Noting that the States Parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights have the obligation to ensure the equal right of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights,

Considering the international conventions concluded under the auspices of the United Nations and the specialized agencies promoting equality of rights of men and women,

Noting also the resolutions, declarations and recommendations adopted by the United Nations and the specialized agencies promoting equality of rights of men and women,

Concerned, however, that despite these various instruments extensive discrimination against women continues to exist,

Recalling that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity,

Concerned that in situations of poverty women have the least access to food, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other needs,

Convinced that the establishment of the new international economic order based on equity and justice will contribute significantly towards the promotion of equality between men and women,

Emphasizing that the eradication of apartheid, of all forms of racism, racial discrimination, colonialism, neo-colonialism, aggression, foreign occupation and domination and interference in the internal affairs of States is essential to the full enjoyment of the rights of men and women,

Affirming that the strengthening of international peace and security, relaxation of international tension, mutual cooperation among all States irrespective of their social and economic systems, general and complete disarmament, and in particular nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control, the affirmation of the principles of justice, equality and mutual benefit in relations among countries and the realization of the right of peoples under alien and colonial domination and foreign occupation to self-determination and independence, as well as respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, will promote social progress and development and as a consequence will contribute to the attainment of full equality between men and women,

Convinced that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields,

Bearing in mind the great contribution of women to the welfare of the family and to the development of society, so far not fully recognized, the social significance of maternity and the role of both parents in the family and in the upbringing of children, and aware that the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination but that the upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women and society as a whole,

Aware that a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women,

Determined to implement the principles set forth in the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and, for that purpose, to adopt the measures required for the elimination of such discrimination in all its forms and manifestations,

Have agreed on the following:

PART I

Article 1.

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term “discrimination against women” shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Article 2.

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

- (a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;
- (b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;
- (c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;
- (d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;
- (e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;
- (f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;
- (g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

Article 3.

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Article 4.

1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.
2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.

Article 5.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

- (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;
- (b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Article 6.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

PART II

Article 7.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;
- (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Article 8.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

Article 9.

- 1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.
- 2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

PART III.

Article 10.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- (a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in preschool, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;
- (b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;
- (c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;
- (d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;
- (e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;
- (f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;
- (g) The same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;
- (h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.

Article 11.

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:
 - (a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;
 - (b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

- (c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;
 - (d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;
 - (e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;
 - (f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.
2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:
- (a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;
 - (b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;
 - (c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;
 - (d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.
3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

Article 12.

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

Article 13.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

- (a) The right to family benefits;
- (b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;
- (c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Article 14.

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of this Convention to women in rural areas.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:
 - (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
 - (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;
 - (c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;
 - (d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;
 - (e) To organize self-help groups and cooperatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;
 - (f) To participate in all community activities;
 - (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;
 - (h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

PART IV.

Article 15.

1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.
2. States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.
3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.
4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

Article 16.

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:
 - (a) The same right to enter into marriage;
 - (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;
 - (c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;
 - (d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
 - (e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;
 - (f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
 - (g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;
 - (h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

PART V.

Article 17.

1. For the purpose of considering the progress made in the implementation of the present Convention, there shall be established a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) consisting, at the time of entry into force of the Convention, of eighteen and, after ratification of or accession to the Convention by the thirty-fifth State Party, of twenty-three experts of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention. The experts shall be elected by States Parties from among their nationals and shall serve in their personal capacity, consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution and to the representation of the different forms of civilization as well as the principal legal systems.
2. The members of the Committee shall be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons nominated by States Parties. Each State Party may nominate one person from among its own nationals.
3. The initial election shall be held six months after the date of the entry into force of the present Convention. At least three months before the date of each election the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a letter to the States Parties inviting them to submit their nominations within two months. The Secretary-General shall prepare a list in alphabetical order of all persons thus nominated, indicating the States Parties which have nominated them, and shall submit it to the States Parties.
4. Elections of the members of the Committee shall be held at a meeting of States Parties convened by the Secretary-General at United Nations Headquarters. At that meeting, for which two thirds of the States Parties shall constitute a quorum, the persons elected to the Committee shall be those nominees who obtain the largest number of votes and an absolute majority of the votes of the representatives of States Parties present and voting.
5. The members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years. However, the terms of nine of the members elected at the first election shall expire at the end of two years; immediately after the first election the names of these nine members shall be chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee.
6. The election of the five additional members of the Committee shall be held in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of this article, following the thirty-fifth ratification or accession. The terms of two of the

additional members elected on this occasion shall expire at the end of two years, the names of these two members having been chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee.

7. For the filling of casual vacancies, the State Party whose expert has ceased to function as a member of the Committee shall appoint another expert from among its nationals, subject to the approval of the Committee.
8. The members of the Committee shall, with the approval of the General Assembly, receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the Assembly may decide, having regard to the importance of the Committee's responsibilities.
9. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the present Convention.

Article 18.

1. States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and on the progress made in this respect:
 - (a) Within one year after the entry into force for the State concerned; and
 - (b) Thereafter at least every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests.
2. Reports may indicate factors and difficulties affecting the degree of fulfilment of obligations under the present Convention.

Article 19.

1. The Committee shall adopt its own rules of procedure.
2. The Committee shall elect its officers for a term of two years.

Article 20.

1. The Committee shall normally meet for a period of not more than two weeks annually in order to consider the reports submitted in accordance with article 18 of the present Convention.
2. The meetings of the Committee shall normally be held at United Nations Headquarters or at any other convenient place as determined by the Committee.

Article 21.

1. The Committee shall, through the Economic and Social Council, report annually to the General Assembly of the United Nations on its activities and may make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from the States Parties. Such suggestions and general recommendations shall be included in the report of the Committee together with comments, if any, from States Parties.
2. The Secretary-General shall transmit the reports of the Committee to the Commission on the Status of Women for its information.

Article 22.

The specialized agencies shall be entitled to be represented at the consideration of the implementation of such provisions of the present Convention as fall within the scope of their activities. The Committee may invite the specialized agencies to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities. PART VI Article 23. Nothing in this Convention shall affect any provisions that are more conducive to the achievement of equality between men and women which may be contained:

- (a) In the legislation of a State Party; or
- (b) In any other international convention, treaty or agreement in force for that State. Article 24. States Parties undertake to adopt all necessary measures at the national level aimed at achieving the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

Article 25.

1. The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States.
2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is designated as the depositary of the present Convention.
3. The present Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
4. The present Convention shall be open to accession by all States. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 26.

1. A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any State Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
2. The General Assembly of the United Nations shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such a request.

Article 27.

1. The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.
2. For each State ratifying the present Convention or acceding to it after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 28.

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall receive and circulate to all States the text of reservations made by States at the time of ratification or accession.
2. A reservation incompatible with the object and purpose of the present Convention shall not be permitted.
3. Reservations may be withdrawn at any time by notification to this effect addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then inform all States thereof. Such notification shall take effect on the date on which it is received.

Article 29.

1. Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months from the date of the request for arbitration the parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, any one of those parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in conformity with the Statute of the Court.
2. Each State Party may at the time of signature or ratification of this Convention or accession thereto declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of this article. The other States Parties shall not be bound by that paragraph with respect to any State Party which has made such a reservation.
3. Any State Party which has made a reservation in accordance with paragraph 2 of this article may at any time withdraw that reservation by notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 30.

The present Convention, the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts of which are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, duly authorized, have signed the present Convention.

OPTIONAL PROTOCOL

Very often, human rights treaties are followed by “Optional Protocols” which may either provide for procedures with regard to the treaty or address a substantive area related to the treaty. Optional Protocols to human rights treaties are treaties in their own right, and are open to signature, accession or ratification by countries who are party to the main treaty.

The Optional Protocol to CEDAW was adopted on 6 October 1999 and includes the **communication procedure** which gives individuals and groups of women the right to complain to the CEDAW Committee about violations of the Convention, and the **inquiry procedure** which enables the Committee to conduct inquiries into grave or systematic abuse of women's human rights in countries that have become party to the Optional Protocol.

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

54/4. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action³ and the Beijing Declaration⁴ and Platform for Action,⁵

Recalling that the Beijing Platform for Action, pursuant to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, supported the process initiated by the Commission on the Status of Women⁶ with a view to elaborating a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁶ that could enter into force as soon as possible on a right-to-petition procedure,

Noting that the Beijing Platform for Action also called on all States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention to do so as soon as possible so that universal ratification of the Convention can be achieved by the year 2000:

1. *Adopts and opens for signature, ratification and accession* the Optional Protocol to the Convention, the text of which is annexed to the present resolution;

³ A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

⁴ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

⁵ *Ibid.*, annex II.

⁶ Resolution 34/180, annex. 99-77473.

2. *Calls upon* all States that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Convention to sign and ratify or to accede to the Protocol as soon as possible;
3. *Stresses* that States parties to the Protocol should undertake to respect the rights and procedures provided by the Protocol and cooperate with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at all stages of its proceedings under the Protocol;
4. *Stresses* also that in the fulfilment of its mandate as well as its functions under the Protocol, the Committee should continue to be guided by the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity;
5. *Requests* the Committee to hold meetings to exercise its functions under the Protocol after its entry into force, in addition to its meetings held under article 20 of the Convention; the duration of such meetings shall be determined and, if necessary, reviewed by a meeting of the States parties to the Protocol, subject to the approval of the General Assembly;
6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide the staff and facilities necessary for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the Protocol after its entry into force;
7. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to include information on the status of the Protocol in her or his regular reports submitted to the General Assembly on the status of the Convention.

***28th plenary meeting
6 October 1999***

Appendix 2:

OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The States Parties to the present Protocol,

Noting that the Charter of the United Nations reaffirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women,

Also noting that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷ proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex,

Recalling that the International Covenants on Human Rights⁸ and other international human rights instruments prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex,

Also recalling the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (“the Convention”), in which the States Parties thereto condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women,

Reaffirming their determination to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and to take effective action to prevent violations of these rights and freedoms,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1.

A State Party to the present Protocol (“State Party”) recognizes the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (“the Committee”) to receive and consider communications submitted in accordance with article 2.

Article 2.

Communications may be submitted by or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals, under the jurisdiction of a State Party, claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the Convention by that State Party. Where a communication is submitted on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals, this shall be with their consent unless the author can justify acting on their behalf without such consent.

⁷ Resolution 217 A (III).

⁸ Resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

Article 3.

Communications shall be in writing and shall not be anonymous. No communication shall be received by the Committee if it concerns a State Party to the Convention that is not a party to the present Protocol.

Article 4.

1. The Committee shall not consider a communication unless it has ascertained that all available domestic remedies have been exhausted unless the application of such remedies is unreasonably prolonged or unlikely to bring effective relief.
2. The Committee shall declare a communication inadmissible where:
 - (a) The same matter has already been examined by the Committee or has been or is being examined under another procedure of international investigation or settlement;
 - (b) It is incompatible with the provisions of the Convention;
 - (c) It is manifestly ill-founded or not sufficiently substantiated;
 - (d) It is an abuse of the right to submit a communication;
 - (e) The facts that are the subject of the communication occurred prior to the entry into force of the present Protocol for the State Party concerned unless those facts continued after that date.

Article 5.

1. At any time after the receipt of a communication and before a determination on the merits has been reached, the Committee may transmit to the State Party concerned for its urgent consideration a request that the State Party take such interim measures as may be necessary to avoid possible irreparable damage to the victim or victims of the alleged violation.
2. Where the Committee exercises its discretion under paragraph 1 of the present article, this does not imply a determination on admissibility or on the merits of the communication.

Article 6.

1. Unless the Committee considers a communication inadmissible without reference to the State Party concerned, and provided that the individual or individuals consent to the disclosure of their identity to that State Party, the Committee shall bring any communication submitted to it under the present Protocol confidentially to the attention of the State Party concerned.
2. Within six months, the receiving State Party shall submit to the Committee written explanations or statements clarifying the matter and the remedy, if any, that may have been provided by that State Party.

Article 7.

1. The Committee shall consider communications received under the present Protocol in the light of all information made available to it by or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals and by the State Party concerned, provided that this information is transmitted to the parties concerned.

2. The Committee shall hold closed meetings when examining communications under the present Protocol.
3. After examining a communication, the Committee shall transmit its views on the communication, together with its recommendations, if any, to the parties concerned.
4. The State Party shall give due consideration to the views of the Committee, together with its recommendations, if any, and shall submit to the Committee, within six months, a written response, including information on any action taken in the light of the views and recommendations of the Committee.
5. The Committee may invite the State Party to submit further information about any measures the State Party has taken in response to its views or recommendations, if any, including as deemed appropriate by the Committee, in the State Party's subsequent reports under article 18 of the Convention.

Article 8.

1. If the Committee receives reliable information indicating grave or systematic violations by a State Party of rights set forth in the Convention, the Committee shall invite that State Party to cooperate in the examination of the information and to this end to submit observations with regard to the information concerned.
2. Taking into account any observations that may have been submitted by the State Party concerned as well as any other reliable information available to it, the Committee may designate one or more of its members to conduct an inquiry and to report urgently to the Committee. Where warranted and with the consent of the State Party, the inquiry may include a visit to its territory.
3. After examining the findings of such an inquiry, the Committee shall transmit these findings to the State Party concerned together with any comments and recommendations.
4. The State Party concerned shall, within six months of receiving the findings, comments and recommendations transmitted by the Committee, submit its observations to the Committee.
5. Such an inquiry shall be conducted confidentially and the cooperation of the State Party shall be sought at all stages of the proceedings.

Article 9.

1. The Committee may invite the State Party concerned to include in its report under article 18 of the Convention details of any measures taken in response to an inquiry conducted under article 8 of the present Protocol.
2. The Committee may, if necessary, after the end of the period of six months referred to in article 8.4, invite the State Party concerned to inform it of the measures taken in response to such an inquiry.

Article 10.

1. Each State Party may, at the time of signature or ratification of the present Protocol or accession thereto, declare that it does not recognize the competence of the Committee provided for in articles 8 and 9.

2. Any State Party having made a declaration in accordance with paragraph 1 of the present article may, at any time, withdraw this declaration by notification to the Secretary-General.

Article 11.

A State Party shall take all appropriate steps to ensure that individuals under its jurisdiction are not subjected to ill treatment or intimidation as a consequence of communicating with the Committee pursuant to the present Protocol.

Article 12.

The Committee shall include in its annual report under article 21 of the Convention a summary of its activities under the present Protocol.

Article 13.

Each State Party undertakes to make widely known and to give publicity to the Convention and the present Protocol and to facilitate access to information about the views and recommendations of the Committee, in particular, on matters involving that State Party.

Article 14.

The Committee shall develop its own rules of procedure to be followed when exercising the functions conferred on it by the present Protocol.

Article 15.

1. The present Protocol shall be open for signature by any State that has signed, ratified or acceded to the Convention.
2. The present Protocol shall be subject to ratification by any State that has ratified or acceded to the Convention. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
3. The present Protocol shall be open to accession by any State that has ratified or acceded to the Convention.
4. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 16.

1. The present Protocol shall enter into force three months after the date of the deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession.
2. For each State ratifying the present Protocol or acceding to it after its entry into force, the present Protocol shall enter into force three months after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 17.

No reservations to the present Protocol shall be permitted.

Article 18.

1. Any State Party may propose an amendment to the present Protocol and file it with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General shall thereupon communicate any proposed amendments to the States Parties with a request that they notify her or him whether they favour a conference of States Parties for the purpose of considering and voting on the proposal. In the event that at least one third of the States Parties favour such a conference, the Secretary-General shall convene the conference under the auspices of the United Nations. Any amendment adopted by a majority of the States Parties present and voting at the conference shall be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations for approval.
2. Amendments shall come into force when they have been approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations and accepted by a two-thirds majority of the States Parties to the present Protocol in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.
3. When amendments come into force, they shall be binding on those States Parties that have accepted them, other States Parties still being bound by the provisions of the present Protocol and any earlier amendments that they have accepted.

Article 19.

1. Any State Party may denounce the present Protocol at any time by written notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Denunciation shall take effect six months after the date of receipt of the notification by the Secretary-General.
2. Denunciation shall be without prejudice to the continued application of the provisions of the present Protocol to any communication submitted under article 2 or any inquiry initiated under article 8 before the effective date of denunciation.

Article 20.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall inform all States of:

- (a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions under the present Protocol;
- (b) The date of entry into force of the present Protocol and of any amendment under article 18;
- (c) Any denunciation under article 19.

Article 21.

1. The present Protocol, of which the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.
2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit certified copies of the present Protocol to all States referred to in article 25 of the Convention.



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